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An Artist's Wanderings

". . . Not unrecompensed the man shall roam
Who at the call of summer quits his home
And plods o'er some wide realm, o'er vale and height,
Though seeking only holiday delight"

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A

HOLIDAY ON THE ROAD

AN ARTIST'S WANDERINGS IN KENT, SUSSEX, AND SURREY

BY

JAMES JOHN HISSEY

AUTHOR OF 'AN OLD-FASHIONED JOURNEY' 'A DRIVE THROUGH ENGLAND' 'ON THE BOX SEAT' ETC.

WITH FOURTEEN FULL-PAGE AND NUMEROUS OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

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RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
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1887

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TO

MY LITTLE SON AND DAUGHTER

JOHN BOUCH AND MAUD MURIEL HISSEY

AND TO THE FONDLY CHERISHED MEMORY

OF THEIR LOVING MOTHER

PREFACE

When the old stage coaches ceased to run, and post-chaises became a thing of the past, road travel practically ended. Cheap and rapid transit has caused the present generation to make long journeys to see much badly instead of a little well, forgetful of the fact that it is not the distance traversed, but what is seen and appreciated, that forms the true delight of travel. Did not Humboldt say of a great wanderer who circumnavigated the globe, that 'he had journeyed further and seen less than any one he knew'? We appear nowadays to be strangely unmindful of the byways of our own country, yet, out of the well-worn paths of travel and familiar railway routes, there exist, even in this crowded England, beauty spots, scenes of rare loveliness, romantic homes of bygone days telling of the age of chivalry, ancient churches replete with interest, quaint old-world villages, and endless odd nooks and corners, all unheeded, and that seem to

beg some one to come and explore them. How few there are who do so! The beautiful old roads of England are now sadly deserted; the speed and convenience of steam has robbed us of the poetry and picturesqueness of travel. Places beautiful and romantic in themselves, away from the tourist tracks, if they have not been written about or become famous by history, are seldom visited. How many people would be aware, say, of the existence of lone Tintagel's castle-crowned and sea-girt rock, were it not for the tradition of King Arthur connected with it? But for the magic of Shakespeare's name, Stratford-on-Avon would probably be as little known to the average Englishman as though it were a remote village in Spain. Who ever dreamt of visiting Loch Katrine or exploring the Trossachs before Scott threw a halo of romance over them? We rush in crowds to famous spots, wholly neglecting others equally interesting. The love-story of Dorothy Vernon attracts thousands yearly to Haddon, yet there are countless other old homes, less renowned truly though not traditionless, fraught with interest but withal practically unknown and unvisited. During our journey, on an unfrequented byway, we came one day upon an ancient manor house, moat-surrounded, with many gables, clustering chimneys, mullioned windows: a romance in

stone—a house whose olden chambers were full of memories, whose walls were weathered into countless tints; before it was an old-time garden, having its yew-trees fantastically clipped; between these we caught a glimpse of a bowling-green, and stone terraces beyond, whilst near at hand was an ancient sundial, moss-encrusted and lichen-stained—a picture and a poem combined: yet the owner of the place told us that during all the years that he had lived there, excepting a stray artist or two, no stranger had visited the spot. Does not this bear out what I say? Yet in its way this charming old house is every whit as well worth seeing as Haddon; to us even more so, because it was fresh and unknown. But had we not been travelling by road, exploring cross-country ways, we should never have seen that delightful relic of the past, or numberless others which from time to time we came upon quite unexpectedly. Then, also, the old roads take one right into the heart of little-visited spots, and reveal to the fortunate traveller thereon a succession of varied scenes, hardly ever beheld now that the railway has monopolised the traffic.

The illustrations I have given will, I trust, whatever their shortcomings, be found to possess the merit of freshness, for, as in my former works of home travel, with one or two exceptions, I have

selected from my sketch-book representations of little-known and seldom visited spots rather than familiar ones.

I have to express my obligation to Mr. Pearson for the feeling and successful manner in which he has rendered my drawings. Respecting these I may remark that, as far as lay in my power, they are all faithful reproductions of scenes and places we came upon, neither added to nor taken from for the sake of picturesqueness: a fair sample, therefore, of the good things that were presented to us, from time to time, as we journeyed along the forsaken highroads and inviting byways of this beautiful corner of Old England.

J. J. H.

South Kensington: 1887.

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A Wayside Inn

A HOLIDAY ON THE ROAD.

CHAPTER I.

Different Methods of spending a Holiday—Rural England—The Old Roads—English Scenery—The Advantages of Change The Start—Croydon—Caterham Valley—Town *versus* Country Houses—The Power of spoiling Scenery—Railways in the Landscape.

DIFFERENT people have different methods of spending their summer holiday. A large majority simply run down by railway to some more or less fashionable watering-place, and there abide, contentedly or otherwise, till the time comes for returning home; others there are who hie them to 'the doubtful joys of the Continent,' as though all good things, in a scenic sense, were to be found beyond the sea. Others again rush hither and thither through many lands as fast as steam can carry them; some even circumnavigate the globe, and I verily believe find

it too small to satisfy their roving propensities. There are still others, less ambitious and fewer in numbers, but not I trust less wise, who deem their native country, small though it be, sufficiently rich in beauty and attractions to keep them there.

Truly rural England is a lovely land. What a homelike, liveable look it possesses! Its gentle greenery, mellow skies, and ancient buildings (time-toned into a pleasing harmony) are the very poetry of scenery, the essence of reposefulness. How peace-bestowing all this happy combination is to the jaded body! how refreshing and restful to the town-tired eye! What a charming contrast with the usual smoke-stained surroundings of our overgrown cities! Then, again, it is close to our own doors; there is no much-dreaded sea-voyaging; no long wearying railway journey necessary to reach it, with all its attendant din and bustle—so begetting of restlessness—to say nothing of the time it takes out of a holiday, the mere getting to and returning from a distant spot, and the exhaustion to the nervous system of prolonged travelling to those who are not over-strong. Perhaps because it is so easy of access is the reason we esteem our home scenery so lightly, or else why is it that that which is so close at hand is practically the most remote?

Be it understood I am speaking of rural England, away from large towns and watering-places with their fashionable throngs, repeating each other so monotonously; away also from the all-levelling influences of the ugly but utilitarian railways—of roadside England, in fact—for he that would know

the real charms of his mother-land must travel through it even as his forefathers did, taking to the highways and byways, disregardful of the iron horse; nohow else can it be properly known and appreciated. And what a pleasant journey may be made on these old roads, so sadly forsaken in this our day!

Yes, in truth, homely roadside England is a very pleasant land to wander in. How eloquent of the past it is, with its dreamy unsophisticated villages, so delightful to the artist's eye, each with its time-hallowed fane, hoary with the age of centuries, its gorse-besprinkled commons with greens and golds so charmingly commingling, its purple spreading heaths, wind-swept moors, bracing open wolds and far-extending downs; and to return to its humanised domesticated side, its quaint old-world inns telling of the fondly cherished coaching days, and less ambitious though not less picturesque rustic hostelries, its cosy wayside cottages, comfortable-looking farmsteads, with their weather-stained outbuildings, lichen-laden and uneven-roofed, all so delightfully unlike each other; its ancient manor-houses, legend-abounding, many with their old moats existing still; its half-timbered homes, stately mansions, and historic palaces, built when men knew how to build—all these and countless more good things too numerous to catalogue, auction fashion, are reserved for the fortunate wayfarer. Go he afoot or on wheels, he has an ever-changing prospect before him; his day's stage will abound in endless varying incidents and delights. The landscape he passes through is a humanised

landscape, and therein lies its special charm : for it has a heart : it is a land of ancient romance and old-remembered traditions, and in many a remote corner curious customs forgotten by the outer world lovingly linger still.

Rightly or wrongly, it seems to me that he who takes his holiday thus fares on the whole as well or better, sees as much (though different in kind), enjoys his outing not less, it may be even more than his foreign wandering fellow-countryman, who is unpatriotic enough to rush abroad upon every available opportunity, possibly wholly unaware of the rich wealth and variety of scenery he leaves behind him all unseen—for is it not a fact that no one knows so little of his own land as an Englishman ? Truly foreign travel is very delightful, and I would be the last one to utter a word against it, were it not that a vast majority of those who go abroad are scandalously ignorant of and unacquainted with the unequalled beauties they leave all unheeded behind them. I of course except sundry famous and guidebook-lauded spots that everybody knows ; spots to my mind spoilt because of their very fame. The professional excursionist and their growing prosperity have robbed them for ever of their unconscious naturalness, their sylvan and pastoral peacefulness, and done away altogether with their delightful flavour of antiquity, so grateful in this age of universal progress.

Railways and tourists' agencies—the latter possibly the worse sinners of the two—have much to answer for in this matter, for they hold out the greatest inducements to make long journeys ; the

farther their passengers travel, the more profitable it is to them. So they tempt the unwary, who appear to be unmindful of the old proverb, 'You may go farther from home and fare worse.' We travel now in crowds, or rather are conveyed from place to place, for travelling proper seems to be a lost art, and to have disappeared with the post-horse and stage-coach; the very speed of the railway has robbed us of the real pleasure of travel; we take no delight in such a journey: how can we? We race through the land at lightning speed; we simply pass through it, we do not see it, and the natural consequence of all this is a sole desire to arrive at our destination with as little delay as possible.

Railways are convenient rather than enjoyable; but though the picturesque coaches and post-chaises are no more, the pleasant old roads still remain to us as charming as ever, leading one right into the heart of rural England, than which I make bold to say there is not a more beautiful land upon the face of the earth, nor one that will better repay leisurely exploring; for it is not a land to hasten through; the more you see of it, the more it delights you, surprises you with its endless resources and tranquil loveliness. What does Hawthorne say of it? This is what he says, and his opinion is the more to be heeded because he was by no means an indiscriminate admirer of things English: 'As regards grandeur, there are loftier scenes in many countries than the best that England can show; but for the picturesqueness of the smallest object

that lies under its gentle gloom and sunshine, there is no scenery like it anywhere.' An American gentleman I once took driving with me also truly remarked : 'The English landscape is so delightful because it is so exquisitely finished, so eye-satisfying and heart-gratifying with all its bewildering ever-changing beauty. Nature with you has been careful to perfect the smallest things ; nowhere does she suggest as with us the idea of crudeness and emptiness, as though she had been unable to complete her work.' And just because English scenery is so gemlike, and finished even to the smallest detail, is it necessary, to thoroughly comprehend its perfected beauty, that it should be seen at leisure, not hurried through, and therefore it seems to me the good old-fashioned way of driving across country is the pleasantest and most delightful method of doing this.

Change is always beneficial, and I would suggest to those who may have the time and opportunity, and who have not already done so, that they should gain a new experience, and try a holiday at home, by taking a driving tour, and in this manner explore some portion of their own land. There are many worse ways of spending a holiday—few better, it seems to me. It hardly matters where they go—the English country is everywhere delightful—so long as they keep well away from the crowded tourists' centres and unbeautiful large cities, whose spreading ugliness and meanness have spoilt some of the fairest spots in Britain, and which, alas! are for ever extending, ceaselessly throwing out their

continually growing suburbs, ruthlessly transforming the fresh green fields into a dreary desolation of bricks and mortar. A gathering of depressingly monotonous structures, utterly devoid of any grace; for what recks the modern speculative builder of beauty? If the English country is lovely, its huge manufacturing cities are the perfection of ugliness, and should be carefully avoided by those in search of the picturesque.

It was June, leafy sunny June, the month of fresh greens, blue skies, and bright flowers, the pleasantest month surely of all the year, and therefore, by a strange perversity, just the time when everybody remains in town. London then truly looks its best, but equally so does the country. By some happy good fortune, it happened one evening that I chanced to come across a portfolio of water-colour drawings, done during my summer rambles in past years. Glancing listlessly over these—for the weather was hot and I was lazily inclined—I found my mind by degrees wandering far, far away, over purple hill and spreading down; then a winding wooded valley came before me, through which flowed a rocky river, cool and clear. Now I was by the side of a trout-haunted stream; next, by way of a change, I found myself facing the open sea with the crisp green curling waves breaking in a musical monotone upon the sandy shore; again, another sketch took me in spirit along a bird-beloved lane, with the tree boughs interlacing above in a tanglement of greenery; then came a pleasant hayfield; with a peep beyond of

cottage homes; and anon a hoary old castle, stern and desolate, took the place of the dreamy pastoral prospect; and so my mind, filled with Nature's poetry and picturesqueness, was willingly led away from my prosaic town surroundings.

Long before I had finished inspecting my treasured sketches, an irrepressible longing took possession of me to exchange the smoke-and-sulphur charged atmosphere of London for the fresh, free air of the country, always so pure and sweet, and not seldom perfume-laden, to replace the endless vistas of bricks and stucco by glimpses of green fields and daisy-dotted meadows, and to substitute for the ceaseless rattle of cabs and general din of traffic soothing country sounds—the gurgling of rippling streams, the grateful splashing of falling waters, the musical 'sur, sur, sur' of the wind-stirred foliage, and the gladsome songs of birds.

What a world of freshness and peaceful country delights those sketches opened up before my mind's vision! They caused within me an intense desire to free myself from the numberless conventionalities and restraints of society, to get right away into the real country, and to wander whither I would—masterless. It little mattered to me where I went, so long as I should be free from guidebook bondage and show-places, with the shoals of sightseers they bring; rather I would explore some quiet land, where I could commune alone with nature, sketch, employ my camera, and generally wander about unheeded, free from the gaze of the vulgar crowd, and thus enjoy a true holiday, idling—for even idle-

ness is sometimes a virtue—pleasantly and profitably the sunny hours away, surrounded by loveliness everywhere, for rural England is to me all beautiful.

Why, I asked myself, should I not exchange the dust and din of London streets for these simple delights, if it so please me, and time and circumstances would permit? Why not, indeed? Because everybody was in town, should I of necessity remain therein? What though it was the height of the season—what signified that to me? Should I merely for fashion's sake keep myself a town prisoner, when my heart was elsewhere, and my eyes were longing for something more beautiful to gaze upon than dusty pavements and crowded streets?

My mind was quickly made up; fortunately my time was my own; I was accountable to no one for it; there were no business engagements to detain me against my will, therefore I determined that I would start on a driving tour forthwith—my usual method of spending my summer holiday: I would explore by road some of the out-of-the-way nooks and corners of rural England.

A few mornings after my determination, according to arrangement, the phaeton was standing at the door fully equipped for the journey, with waterproofs, rugs, horse clothing duly stowed away, not forgetting the useful horn. The short interval of time between my making up my mind and the hour appointed for departure had been fully occupied in the delightful task of preparation; for the pleasures of anticipation are by no means to be despised—they form with the realisation and after recollec-

tions an essential part of an expedition. Road-books that had been many a journey with us, and bore evidences of much usage, together with sundry maps, were hunted up; sketch-books, paint-box, and easel got together, and colours replenished. A compact portable photographic apparatus fitted for instantaneous work had also been purchased, this being a new addition to our usual travelling outfit, procured at the earnest recommendation of a friend, an enthusiastic amateur photographer, who kindly put us into the way of using it before our departure. I may say here that we never regretted our purchase, for we found the camera to add wonderfully to the pleasures of our excursion, by enabling us to secure, without any loss of time, any particular view that we wished. By its magic aid ancient buildings of many kinds, with all their architectural details, quaint conceits, merits, and demerits, were faithfully reproduced, and in this particular respect we found our photographic apparatus most useful, for it was set up and taken down in a few minutes, and a picture was secured, with little delay and small trouble, that it might have taken hours to produce in pencil. Truly a photograph is but a poor substitute for a sketch, but on such a journey, taken solely for pleasure, one does not always feel inclined to deliberately set to and paint everything that strikes him, or that he would like to take a reminder of some kind back home with him. And as we took some dozen or more such bits each day, had we been unprovided with a camera, we should have lost many pleasing representations of curious old houses

we passed on the way, of picturesque past-time villages, ancient coaching inns, and the numerous interesting objects one comes across on a day's drive. We took paper films with us, so that we avoided the weight and risk of glass breakage, the two great drawbacks, to the tourist at any rate, of the old process. The photographic prints, duly collected in order and mounted in an album, formed a very pleasing memento of our journey, and helped us to recall the various spots and places that we had visited: they refreshed our memories and brought back to our recollections many little incidents of our outing that otherwise might have been forgotten. Photography has now been reduced to such a simple art that any one can take a photograph, though not necessarily a picture, be it borne in mind.

But I must not wander thus, or our journey will never be begun. The horses, well accustomed to road work, were pawing the ground, impatient to be off. How eager they appeared! I verily believe they had, by some unexplainable instinct, a kind of knowledge that they were about to start upon a country outing, and rejoiced in the fact—a fanciful belief very possibly; but of one thing I am sure, as far as my own horses are concerned at any rate, that they appreciate a change of air as much as their owner; they sniff in an unmistakable manner of delight at the moorland and sea breezes, and in their first day in the country frisk about playful as a child fresh from school.

Mounting the phaeton, the word was given, the traces tightened, and we trotted along at a merry

pace, bound upon 'a cruise on wheels' along the pleasant roads and green winding lanes of southern England; for though we had arranged no actual plans as far as related to the details of our journey, acting upon the principle that the pleasures of each day were sufficient for us, we had still so far decided on our programme as to select Sussex and Kent as the portion of England in which we would take our holiday. These two counties are typically English in their mellow, homelike, varied scenery; within their borders are contained a wealth of good things, they are replete with archæological, historic, and antiquarian interest, fertile also in legendary lore, and abound as well in panoramic surprises (for both are hilly counties), that although together they do not cover a vast extent of ground, yet they offer to the tourist a perfect treasure-store of beauty spots, besides countless associations of a time-honoured and romantic past. Such an *embarras de richesse* do they embrace as to satisfy surely the most exacting traveller. A whole summer holiday, and a long one, can be easily and delightfully spent wandering hither and thither about sequestered Sussex and picturesque Kent, very lands of scenic revelations, which for the true lover of rural England afford almost endless attractions. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration that a drive through these is a continued poem, a succession of ready-made pictures, a dream of loveliness.

Unfortunately Sussex and Kent are too near our own doors, too readily accessible, to be appreciated as they should. Were they only difficult to get at,

had we to travel far and long to reach them, they would possibly be more considered than they are, for by some curious law of nature we mostly prize those things that are difficult to obtain ; that which we can secure with little trouble or cost we seldom value. So it is we rush in crowds after distant beauties, scarcely heeding those nearer home.

The road from London to Croydon, our first halting-place, may be described (if I can employ the expression) as a getting out of town all the way. Nothing, perhaps, is better calculated to reveal the vast extent of the ever-spreading wilderness of houses, shops, surburban villas, terraces, and network of railways that go to make up the mighty province of bricks and mortar of our nineteenth-century Babylon than to drive right out of it from a central portion until the genuine open country is reached. The time required to accomplish this is considerable, and the distance that has to be traversed forms quite a journey in itself.

Reaching Croydon, we baited the horses there, taking meanwhile a stroll round the place. This once quiet Surrey town is now given over to the improving mania, and consequently is rapidly losing all individuality, and becoming more and more like a bit of translated Cockneydom — its originality is fast disappearing. Why, I wonder, everywhere this longing for stucco and plate-glass, this slavish uniformity, that is spreading like a blight over all the land ? How monotonously uninteresting our towns will be when they resemble each other much as do peas in a pod ! Why this insane desire to bring London

down piecemeal into the country? Here, as elsewhere, we observed that the old coaching inns longest retain their old-time appearance, one with its ancient sign stretching right across the street, its ample archway leading to an extensive courtyard beyond, and general look of substantial comfort, appears to have successfully resisted the unreasonable desire for alteration, and is wisely and proudly content to remain as originally designed. Unimproved, unchanged, not much to boast of architecturally, certainly, yet it possesses the supreme quality of fitness for its purpose; the old building speaks plainly of the past, and lifts the whole street from out the region of the commonplace.

Leaving Croydon we soon entered upon Caterham valley. The day was fine and the country was looking its best, but the first portion of our road was certainly not noticeable for its beauty, in spite of the advantages of the bright cheery sunshine, nor on the other hand was it altogether void of interest. London builders have discovered this valley and have begun to invade it; many, if not most, of the houses scattered here and there on the hillsides have an unmistakable town flavour about them; they look lost amongst the green fields; out of place, like strangers in a foreign land; they do not seem to spring from the soil; they are in it, but form no part or parcel of the landscape; they have no right of place or sympathy in the scene. Of what order of architecture are these structures? A nameless one, as far as I am aware—imitating something of all and comprehending none, combining opposite styles without blending

them, improving upon (save the mark) old time-considered details, for ever straining after cheap effect at the cost of all things else. Shall I, for want of a better term, christen them the Victorian villa order; or are they better described by the house agent as 'desirable genteel residences, of attractive elevations,' and so forth, in superabundance? But as we proceeded, gradually the inhabited portions of the valley were left behind, and in time, to our great satisfaction, the unspoilt country was reached, no longer these town trespasses disfigured the rural prospect, much to our gratification.

Even at the commencement of our stage we noticed with pleasure one or two ancient farmsteads still existing, past-time structures, weather-tinted, charming the eye by their simple naturalness, their picturesqueness emphasised by the contrast with the prosaic, commonplace houses around, 'fitted with all modern conveniences:' these, doubtless, but showy and comfortless notwithstanding. Could one but conjure all these later-time erections away, one cannot but feel how greatly the prospect would gain. Even age—that beautifier of buildings—were they to possess it, could not give them grace; the most it could do would be to soften their harsher features down and make them less assertive; but form it could not alter. On the other hand, take the less pretentious and homely farmsteads, with all their rambling outbuildings, away (the outcome of necessity, and eminently picturesque because of their happy irregularity), and you would rob the scene of one of its most attractive features, its instinctive human asso-

ciations, the very poetry of rural civilisation, for without the husbandman mankind could not exist.

Buildings erected for speculative sale, constructed on the principle of the greatest outside show for the least expenditure—man consequently having to fit his home as best he may, not the home (as in the benighted past ages) being made to suit the special requirements or whims of its owner—must ever fail to satisfy the cultivated eye: they but too plainly betray their origin.

It is a pity that man, by the structures he raises, should have the power of spoiling scenery in the manner he does; doubly pitiful it seems, because, if he built worthily and suitably, he has the power of adding to instead of detracting from the interest of a scene. I by no means hold with Ruskin that manufactories and railways are the chief sinners in this respect. Truly, I most willingly grant that a gathering of huge warehouses and prison-like factories (often more ugly than the actual prisons themselves), with all their accompaniments of blackened rivers, tall vomiting chimneys, smoke, dirt, and din, is one of the most depressing sights I can imagine. The genius of hideousness seems to preside over such places. It is astonishing how man has managed to disfigure God's fair earth in his selfish, ceaseless, money-making struggles; for in his haste to be rich he considers not his neighbours, nor the ancient loveliness of the land; for what chance has poor beauty in the balance against grime and wealth?

But, happily, manufacturing towns do not spread themselves all over the country; you can avoid them

if you will; and railways do not meet you by the roadside generally; distance disguises most of their shortcomings—in verity it 'lends enchantment to the view'; and at a long way off I am not sure if the white trail of steam of a moving train, or the view of an extended viaduct, are not rather a gain than a loss to the landscape. The first lends life to the scene, and the latter with its many arches repeating themselves may, without a great strain upon the imagination, be converted into a Roman aqueduct or viaduct. The effect of the two at a distance is almost identical; and the long straight line at the top of the structure, with the contrasting circular forms below, is pleasing to the eye, and the combined whole a valuable feature in any landscape.

Manufacturing towns you may avoid; and though railways have gridironed the land all over, their existence, more often than not, is a matter of knowledge rather than of observation to the wanderer by road; they do not assert themselves everywhere. But with man the case is different: he builds his houses on every side, close by the roadway, up hill and down dale, generally selecting the choicest spots. You thus cannot ignore or escape from him; even the enchanting hand of distance fails to help you here.

Road Travelling in 'the Good Old Days'

CHAPTER II.

Caterham—A Fine Panorama—Scenic Surprises—An Ancient Milestone—The Forsaken Highway—Godstone—An Evening Stroll—Our Churches—Picturesque Almshouses—The Old-fashioned Inn and the Modern Hotel—Curious Titles to Rooms—Old Signs—Past Recollections.

CONTINUING on our way, we presently reached the village of Caterham—evidently a prosperous little place, judging from the many new buildings springing up all around. Caterham is pleasantly situated in a sheltered valley with swelling downs around, and doubtless its present prosperity—which, by the way, has not added to its picturesqueness—is due to the facilities of the railway, and the number of people seeking for country residences within easy reach of London still just far enough from town to be in the real country and to enjoy rustic pursuits. Yet these very advantages bid eventually to spoil the spot; for how long, we could not help asking ourselves, will it retain its rural attractions after the speculative builder has found it out? From what I can judge of his doings,

this will only be a matter of time. If you desire to live in the real country in undisturbed tranquillity, you will wisely select some retired spot well out of touch of the iron way. *Verb. sap.*

Leaving Caterham behind, the road gradually grew more and more rural till, nearing Godstone, it became pretty in the extreme, just before reaching which a glorious far-spreading panorama opened out to the left before us, both surprising and delighting us by its unexpectedness. One of the great charms of road travel is the delightful uncertainty of what lies before you. Each turn in the way reveals something fresh; you are thus led on and on with an irresistible attraction. Coming unawares, and without any foreknowledge of the good things that are in store for you, enhances wonderfully the effect of even the finest prospect. How often have I (and doubtless many others have experienced the same feeling) been disappointed with the fairest scenes by being fully prepared for all their beauties beforehand. Glowing guide-book accounts, written to order, as a rule, lead the imagination to expect too much; but to come suddenly and wholly unexpectedly upon a scene of great natural beauty is quite another matter: the quality of pleasant surprise causes one to thoroughly appreciate and enjoy its living loveliness. It comes upon the traveller as a revelation; and, besides, does it not possess the added charm of self-discovery? I am not one of those unfortunate individuals who require the beauties of a country to be pointed out to me; rather do I resent such dictation.

Pulling up at the side of the road, in order the better to admire the view, on its grass-grown margin we observed an old moss-encrusted milestone, half hidden by trailing brambles and surrounded by flourishing docks, chipped, crumbled, and neglected, the lettering upon it almost undecipherable. Poor old milestone! now that road travellers are so few and far between, your services are but seldom required. Brushing aside the bramble-stalks and overgrown weeds, we inspected this old battered relic of the king's highway, on the possible chance of discovering the distance we were from our night's destination; but though we were unable to procure the information we desired, we came across the date 1745 cut thereon, and still traceable. Nearly a century and a half had that once useful milestone stood there. How different must the highway have appeared when it was first erected! Then all the traffic went by road, and the now lonely thoroughfare was a scene of constant bustle, hardly, if ever, free from the clatter of horses' hoofs, the rumbling of carriage-wheels, or the steady crunching sounds of goods-laden waggons. In some parts of the country you may journey far and long upon the old mail-roads, and, save when near a village, very probably not meet a soul, or, if you do, it is ten chances to one that individual will be a solitary shepherd or field labourer going to or returning from his work. These ancient highways, erst so thronged, are nowadays but little traversed. They were planned mainly for through communication between far distant towns, not for local convenience, and this accounts for their little use, save in those

parts where they adapt themselves to the requirements of the district. Strangely enough, judging from our experience, the comparatively narrow by-lanes are the most frequented, the needs that caused them still existing.

Proceeding onwards, in due course we came to Godstone ; and, pulling up at its quiet old-fashioned inn, we received that best of all receptions for a tired traveller—a hearty welcome. It was the landlord's niece who came out to greet us with a pleasant smile, and we felt sure that our 'lines had fallen in pleasant places.'

The ostler was quickly summoned, and, driving into the roomy courtyard of our hotel, we handed the horses over to his keeping. Having inspected their quarters for the night—for we always made it a point to see after our animals' comforts as well as our own—we strolled out to have a look at the place.

Godstone — Godstone Green, our road-book (Paterson's, published in 1829) has it—pleased us much, not because of its beauty—for it is not beautiful—but on account of its simple naturalness. Considering its distance from town only nineteen miles, reckoning from Westminster Bridge (I am quoting from Paterson)—it has certainly wonderfully preserved its old-world flavour : it looks unsophisticated enough to be some remote hamlet far away in the distant shires. Most probably, the reason why Godstone still maintains its unaffected homeliness is because it is unblest with a railway. Doubtless the worthy inhabitants thereof would deem one a great improvement to the place, and would consider its certain

convenience an ample set-off against any possible loss of the picturesque they might suffer thereby. If so, they could hardly enter into the spirit of our feeling of thankfulness for being, even for a short time, both out of sight and sound of the fussy locomotive. Truly, we passed next day, and noticed it marked on our map, a Godstone-Road Station, but it is nearly three miles away, along a hilly road. Around this a new Godstone is springing up—one of those uninteresting, featureless productions of our age. It is this very newness and want of past associations that makes the thriving villages of Western America so unbearable and wearisome to me.

Somehow this quiet little place impressed us with an out-of-the-way feeling, as though there were long leagues between us and the 'busy haunts of men.' We could hardly realise that only that morning we had been driving along the hot, bustling, and dusty streets of the million-peopled metropolis; so much had we seen on our way, compared to what we should have done on a railway journey of many miles, that it was difficult to believe we had in reality only done nineteen miles or so altogether that day.

Godstone is surrounded by a very pleasant country; and, from a chat that we had with the worthy landlord in his cosy parlour during the course of the evening, we gathered that there was much of interest all around—ancient churches, old timbered houses, curious hamlets, all well worth exploring. Some day we look forward to returning to this com-

fortable homely hostel, and to making it our head-quarters for a time, in order to become better acquainted with the surrounding neighbourhood—one full of attractions for the antiquary.

We had a very pleasant stroll that evening as far as the village church, which we discovered, for some unexplainable reason, as is often the case, is situated at some distance from the mass of the congregation. An inviting footpath led us thither; this took us alongside of quite a large pond, extensive enough almost to deserve the title of lakelet—a stilly wood-fringed pool, doubling the trees around its banks upon its mirror-like surface, and reflecting as well the glowing amber of the evening sky. What an additional charm and interest water gives to a scene! Even a small pond, if near at hand, is of value in a picturesque sense—bringing down, as it does, a bit of the silvery sky from above, with all its lightness and brightness. The gleam of sparkling water, however insignificant in itself, both attracts and gratifies the eye. A simple pond, with rush-grown sides, and it may be with a rustic lad fishing therein with a pin for a hook and a crooked stick for a rod, never catching anything as far as I have ever observed—but no matter!—such an apparently unpromising subject, properly treated, may form a very pleasing painting. How little goes to make a picture! I have seen such things, lovingly done, hanging upon the walls of fine London houses, and much esteemed by their owners, taking as they do a bit of humble wayside poetry into the very heart of luxury, in such refreshing contrast to the ambitious or

showy surroundings of over-refined homes. Yet how few people would ever imagine that there could be any beauty or poetry in such a commonplace subject! Men seldom perceive the beauty that exists in lowly things till an artist has revealed it to them. I well remember upon one occasion, whilst painting a village pond, with some geese upon it and a peep of dark green woods beyond, a stranger coming up to me and begging permission to see what I was doing, his excuse being that his curiosity was aroused, for he could not possibly imagine whatever I could find to paint there. Then, looking at my nearly finished picture, my interrogator remarked, 'Well, I never should have dreamt you could have made anything out of that. I never saw any beauty in it before to-day, and I have passed that old pond hundreds of times in my life. But now I perceive that it was my fault: you have shown to me beauty in an unexpected spot.' It requires the mind as well as the eye to see a thing. Seeing and comprehending are two very different properties.

Passing, then, by this picturesque pond which originated this too long digression, we soon came upon the old church, crowning the top of a gentle rise which commands an extensive prospect. A fine old church it is, as ancient Surrey churches mostly are. Moreover (unfortunately a very rare moreover), it has been carefully and lovingly restored, and has therefore gained rather than lost by such restoration. Much as we may dislike or dread the restorer, he is a necessary evil. Old buildings must be maintained; we cannot allow them to fall into decay: our descen-

dants would not thank us for doing nothing thus, for the fear of doing wrong. The difficulty is to find the right man to do the work—one who is in true sympathy with the spirit of the ancient builders; one who will be content to carry out the intentions of the original design (even to the smallest detail) with scrupulous fidelity—as far as may be possible, that is—and not to show his own cleverness and originality in altering it. Such men, alas! are rare.

Somehow I do not like the expression 'restore:' it is too indefinite; it appears to me to leave the door open to abuses. Our aim should be rather to repair than restore an ancient building, taking the ordinary acceptation of the latter word, and the astonishing wholesale vandalisms that have been perpetrated and excused by the implied authority it gives. Reparation is, I think, a better term to use, one less liable to allow of misinterpretation, wilful or otherwise.

It must be remembered that these old hallowed fanes are sacred relics of a never-returning past, and as they have been bequeathed to us, so should we hold them in sacred trust for our children. The flavour of antiquity they possess is a very precious thing, and one not to be lightly esteemed; its charm is priceless, for no money will purchase it; like traditions and old associations, it must pre-exist—we cannot have such things to order, as our relic-loving Transatlantic cousins full well know. I remember, upon one occasion, a few years ago, taking a lengthened journey with one of them, in this old England of ours, and I asked him (as coming directly from a

land where all things were comparatively new) what it was that struck him most in the landscape; and he replied, 'Your grey and solemn country churches, that I see everywhere, they touch my heart as nothing inanimate has ever done yet. They are truly poems in stone, and raise a feeling within me not to be expressed in words nor analysed.' Yes, verily a past presence seems to linger around them. How many generations of worshippers have they not seen come and go! What rejoicings and what sorrowings have they not witnessed! How deeply they appeal to our innermost sympathies! They belong not to our age nor to the rural villages alone: they are for us all. Therefore it is doubly sorrowful to think that the precious aroma of antiquity which is their heritage, the very atmosphere of the past that seems so fondly to cling to their time-toned walls, can by thoughtless action be lost to us for ever, never by any human power to be replaced. It has taken centuries to make them what they are; yet, sad truth, it must be confessed that in as many days all this gathered glamour of unnumbered years may be utterly destroyed.

Enthusiastic clergymen, well-intentioned doubtless, but ill-informed, and, art-ignorant or art-ignoring whitewash-loving churchwardens, have already wrought havoc enough in dealing with these ancient structures. It is surely the bounden duty of all Englishmen interested in the matter, as far as may lie in their power, to see that the ancient edifices yet left to us unspoilt (and happily their number still is large) should not, when the necessary and inevitable time

for reparation arrives, be heedlessly handed over to the tender mercies of those who have no reverence or feeling for antiquity. Let such build our modern churches, if needs must be; but, whatever else they may or may not do, let them keep their destroying hands from off our glorious old fanes, fraught with the hallowed memories of long centuries.

We are careful enough respecting the doctors we employ for our own bodies, as to their skill and knowledge; if we were only half as careful of the fitness of the architects to whom we entrust our old buildings, it would be well.

The view from the churchyard is very fine, and well worth a long journey for itself; but, charming though the prospect was, we were led away from it by an unexpected treat—for once, man's handiwork proved more attractive to us than Nature's varied beauties. Close by the churchyard was a row of the most picturesque almshouses, and this it was that arrested our attention. Such a delightful dwelling-place, we felt it would be almost worth while to be poor if one could be sure of such a peace-bestowing habitation. Many stately piles and costly mansions that abound throughout the country are not half so pleasant to look upon, for they utterly fail to suggest the feeling of restful abiding. Long, low, and irregular the building is, with a unique chapel (quite mediæval in feeling) blended in the structure and forming a consistent part of one comprehensive whole. At one end is a building with a projecting upper story, and a quaint outside staircase; this, together with the Gothic porches, leaded latticed windows, the scrolled

plaster-work between the oaken beams, the shaped chimney-stacks, many gables, and the contrasts of light and shade that all this in-and-out irregularity causes, formed a most charming and uncommon bit of architectural grouping, seeming more like what a poet would conceive than existing fact. Simple, though varied both in design and detail, it possesses the rare quality of unpretentious quietude; original, yet free from undesirable eccentricity; homelike above all (as befits a building of its purpose).

Although this eye-charming bit of architecture had an unmistakable old world look about it, it was, we found out, of comparatively recent date, being, indeed, designed by the late Sir Gilbert Scott; but still it had taken upon itself the weather tints of several summer suns, winter frosts and storms, and by these it had become so toned down as to take away any impression of newness. Yet, though so comparatively modern, this little gem of homely architecture had all the effect of the best work of the past. Why did it give to us this pleasing impression, we wondered—a quality so much to be desired and so seldom obtained?—for it possessed neither the glamour of tradition, the interest of history, nor charm of age. But the question that we could not help putting to ourselves was one that was readily answered: in the first place the design is good, it breathes the spirit of the past; the very work gives to one the impression of thoughtful, painstaking handicraft.

Returning to our inn, after our interesting ramble, we entered the long, low-ceilinged coffee-room, the very picture of cosiness; and what a pleasant even-

ing we spent in that charming old-fashioned room, with its windows looking out upon the village green, its ancient furniture, and the curious odds and ends around! How reposeful and homelike it appeared; what a contrast to the showy and expensively furnished, yet cheerless, rooms of our modern hotels!

The hotel, as opposed to the old English inn, is the creation of the railway; it is the necessity of our times, when we travel so in multitudes; it is vast and business-like, grand as well (if size constitutes grandeur, as many people seem to imagine); convenient, but comfortless. But, in spite of all—the Fates be praised!—that most excellent institution, the English inn of our forefathers, in which you might really take your ease, where you were treated more as a guest than a stranger, and your individuality was not lost in a number—where the landlord himself, not an uninterested waiter, welcomed the arriving, or wished good speed to the departing, traveller—and where both host and hostess were not above seeing after the wants and even special whims of those who patronised their house,—this most excellent institution, as I have said, has not yet been improved utterly out of being; and of such was ours that night.

Instead of a mute waiter in funereal black, we had a tidy, civil waitress to attend upon us, genuinely anxious above all things that we had all we required, even seeming disappointed when we replied that there was really nothing more she could do or get for us. We had simply asked for a tea with some cold meat; and what a substantial and varied meal we discovered had been prepared. There was on the table beef,

lamb, a veal-pie, an excellent ham (we speak from experience, for we tried it), besides a crisp salad, fresh from the garden, together with sundry cakes, marmalade, eggs, and other good things. Little wonder there was nothing more we required! A good old-fashioned meal this—one not to be despised; nor to be had at a modern hotel, unless, perhaps, it happen to be situated in Yorkshire, that land of good living and cakes, even, I think, before Scotland in this respect; for our North-country kinsfolk do not understand being put off with a few chips of dried toast and minute pats of butter that the nineteenth-century Boniface places before us. A comfortable, homely meal, this spread tea of our early-dining forefathers—one almost out of date nowadays; a meal, moreover, possessing the virtue that it can be had fairly good, even at the humblest hostelry; and, when travelling across country, infinitely to be preferred to a badly cooked dinner. This, in rural inns, we seldom ordered unless we felt assured of our quarters.

Glancing about our room, we chanced to notice a newspaper; and as it was one we had not seen we began to read it, when presently we discovered that we had been indulging in news three weeks old! Then we turned to the advertisements, to see if we could obtain any amusement from them, for often these afford entertainment to an inquiring mind; indeed, to me the advertisement portion of some papers is the most readable part of them. After glancing through the list of the 'Hatched, Matched, and Dispatched,' and various other an-

nouncements, we came upon the following gem, which we took the liberty of cutting out.

TO be LET, FURNISHED, in a well-known odds-and-ends old suburb, a little, quaint, very old-fashioned, countrified house; five minutes from Metropolitan Railway and City omnibus; will comfortably house four persons and three servants; bedrooms all good; house warm and free from draughts; real old furniture, except beds, carpets, &c.; but alas! there are no immaculate electric bells or hot baths, ever ready; the ceilings are low and the walls only panelled. There are, however, some famous old cupboards, and a real ghost in the strange old cellar, said to be sociable and a good judge of wine; in fact, the only modern improvement it can boast of is good drainage. Apply, &c.

That house agent should make his fortune; the description is worthy of the renowned auctioneer, George Robins, who is credited with having advertised that the only drawback to a country house he had for sale, was the litter of rose-leaves and the noise made by the nightingales! And upon another occasion it is said of him, that he gave such a charming account of a rural residence that a client had placed in his hands for disposal, that the owner, upon reading the advertisement, exclaimed he had no idea his place was so beautiful, and that he should change his mind and not sell it.

But there is a vast difference between the ideal and the reality. Tempted by the description given of a castle for sale in a 'house agent's list,' 'possessing a fine baronial hall, panelled,' and so forth for many lines, and tempted also by the nominal price, we ventured to get an order to view C—— Castle, only an hour's railway journey from London. Fancy, we said to ourselves, owning a real old

castle ; and, moreover, it was to be had at the paltry price of a 'genteel residence'! Our hearts beat high as we approached the station where we were to alight. A haunting fear took possession of us the whole journey, that the place might be already sold. Alas! our pride and expectations had a grievous fall. We had taken it for granted that a castle must be old ; I am not sure that we had not even pictured some sort of a drawbridge. But what was the stern reality ?—a modern brick building, square and ugly, with thin walls, embattled on the top ! ! ! Truly we entered by a large *gothic* archway (for we determined to see the farce out)—the door was of stained deal, studded with great nails—and then we came to 'the fine baronial hall, panelled.' Well, it was panelled with stained deal ; and the fireplace, a deal structure also, adorned with fret-saw work, a sight to laugh at or grieve about. The old rheumatic body who showed us over the pitiful sham, said, 'One or two gentlemen has been to see it, and Lor, sir, one of 'em did go on when he saw the place.' And we did not wonder at it. This little history is an unvarnished statement of fact, rather under than over drawn.

We awoke the next morning to a glorious day, a summer day of bright warm sunshine, with a blue cloud-flecked sky above—one of these almost perfect days, often to be had in England and seldom elsewhere. I maintain this as a fact, in spite of all the abuse that has been heaped upon our climate. I can only in charity suppose that the people who exclaim against this so vehemently and everlastingly

gather their knowledge of English weather from a city existence, and in truth I must own that the sun in our overgrown towns generally has to filter its way through a smoke-laden atmosphere. We mostly live in cities, in this society-loving age, and we seem thus to judge of a whole by a part. Our ancestors, who loved crowds less than we do, and who were contented with the little excitements of a purely country life, or were obliged to be content therewith (for railways did not whisk them up to town upon every and any excuse), it must not be forgotten, spoke of their country as 'sunny England.' And I must confess that my experience of rural England confirms their opinion that it was (and is) a sunny land.

How light and fresh and fragrant was the early morning air that came wafted in through our open window, the soft breezes bearing with them a suspicion of new-mown hay, of all the many country odours surely the most delightful! And again, how still and peaceful all things seem the first day in the country; the most notable thing of all to me, in contrast to town, is its quietude. Of course one hears sounds: now and again a stray cart or waggon comes slowly, not in feverish haste, along the road, or it may be the chime of a distant clock greets your ear, the whetting of a scythe (not so common, by the way, as of old, now that mowing-machines have been invented), the lowing of far-off kine, or perchance the bleating of sheep; but these sounds are soothing ones, agreeably contrasting with the noises of large towns. And everywhere you have the

gladsome song of birds. In London we have only the twittering of sparrows, which may be lively or irritating as the case may be, but which is certainly not musical. Country sounds, excepting the hurrying of the railway train (if that can fairly be termed one), are all rest-bestowing, and but serve to emphasise the general quietude.

Our room of course boasted of an old-fashioned four-poster—any other furniture of the kind would have been out of harmony with its surroundings; for though the exterior of our inn had evidently been modernised as well as its title (of which hereafter), the interior was delightfully original, retaining as it did a real flavour of the past. The internal economy of the old house had unmistakably been modified from time to time to suit a lessened business, part of the edifice being converted into a residence. Through this the landlord took us to see his garden, of which he seemed proud; and we could not but notice how the rooms there led one into the other in an uncomfortable makeshift manner, more curious than convenient. This altering ancient buildings to suit a different purpose to that originally intended is a most difficult and ungracious task, enough to baffle the skill of the most experienced architect. You cannot 'put new wine into old bottles' with success, architecturally speaking.

Attracted by the quaint and suggestive names painted on the several doors of our hostel, we begged permission to look over the old place, which was readily granted. We copied some of these strange announcements, which, as they may interest my

readers, I will here transcribe, for I venture to say that he might travel far and long before meeting with a similar curious collection. These, then, are they :—

'Ye Smokynge Room.'

'Ye Barre.'

'Ye Cellare.'

'Ye Garrettes.'

'Let us to Billiards !—*Shakspeare.*'

'Ye Council Chambre.' A fine room, with an open oak-beamed ceiling, showing, as architects say, its construction. Then upon a passage door was the legend 'Untoe ye Banquettynge Chambre,' another fine room that has evidently long outlived its use, for it had a sad uncared-for look ; no longer now, as erst, do its time-stained walls re-echo the merry jest or boisterous laughter of gay company, for it is now a depository of old lumber.

Leaving out of consideration the obviously intended quaintness, this manner of naming rooms has its useful side, and is in many ways to be preferred to the general plan of simple numbers, which are readily forgotten and explain nothing, being numbers merely.

On paying our bill (a very reasonable one, by the way, and, I may add, as we expected it would be ; for is it not a frequent case that the better your hotel and accommodation the less the charge, and *vice versâ* ?—I am speaking now solely of country inns : in towns, of course, position, with the high rental it entails, has to be taken into due consideration) —

on paying our bill, then, we observed that it was headed :—

THE CLAYTON ARMS HOTEL,
Late YE WHYTE HARTE HOSTELRIE,

which caused us to remark to our good host that we thought that, like most old things, the ancient title was the better of the two—one more in keeping with the place—and that we considered it a pity it had been changed for such a prosaic appellation. In reply to which remark our landlord said that he quite agreed with us, but it was the wish of the present proprietor that the ancient title should be altered—the more the pity. How quaintly and delightfully unfamiliar reads the old-time superscription, 'Ye Whyte Harte Hostelrie!' How such takes you back into the far-away past! How it suggests altogether another England to the one we live in now—for better or worse a wholly different land! How it brings before one the old coaching days, with all their pleasant recollections!—their discomforts are little considered now, for Time with his kindly hand ever softens the evil and magnifies the good. It is more or less an ideal past that we picture to ourselves. And the remembrance of the old coaches in turn conjure up the long-forgotten highwayman, so picturesque in poetry, prose, and painting, yet withal so undesirable in reality. Such and many other similar associations do old quaint signs like this bring before one. Whatever of romance can such a prosaic title as 'The Clayton Arms' suggest?

A Surrey Cornfield

CHAPTER III.

Cottage Homes—A Common—Rural Playgrounds—Beautiful Smoke—In Search of the Picturesque—A Sketch—'All things come to him who waits'—A Mysterious Stranger—A Chat with a Travelling Photographer—Chance Gossips by the Way—Hop Fields—Eden Bridge—Horses' Instinct—A New Railway—A Castle in a Hollow—Moats and their Water Supply.

Leaving Godstone, we passed through a pretty rolling country. On our way, we came across, for the first time this journey, some old weather-browned thatched cottages—real rustic thatched cottages, no sham make-beliefs; homely abodes these of the tillers of the soil. Somehow, thatched buildings always suggest to me pleasant thoughts of rural contentment. Doubtless such old places are vastly more picturesque than desirable as dwellings; more beloved of artists than by social economists. Possibly a modern brick-built cottage, with a chilly looking slate roof thereon, is infinitely to be preferred as a living place; yet withal it does not suggest either the comfort or cosiness of the humble thatched abode. A pity it is that so many things beautiful to look

upon are not so beautiful in practice. A worthless dilapidated old ruin will make a far better picture than the most perfect cathedral or stately hall, however fine these may be in themselves.

I verily believe one of the things that makes Devonshire scenery so charming is its numberless, ever-occurring thatched cottages, so eye-pleasing all. It is the sum of little things that goes to make up the beauty of a scene; when these are absent, scenery (as generally in America) may be grand, but not homelike or lovable. How artists delight to represent these old cottages! What painter or lover of the picturesque ever desires to portray a modern model labourer's dwelling, or, it may be, dwellings erected for economy, all in a row—a most depressing sight—when the country around is so fair?

It may be, to a certain extent, a selfish wish to desire that our peasant poor should reside in picturesque dwellings, which appear only delightful to those who have not to inhabit them. A little reality often takes a good deal of the glamour from off the picturesque. An old castle or moated manor-house considered as a building is very romantic doubtless, but I question whether, were I compelled to make such my home, I should not prefer something more up to the ideas of modern times. We give high prices for pictures of ragged beggars: I wonder, do we admire the real thing? Rather is it not the artist's ideal we prize? Thus we reasoned with ourselves, as we presently came across some wofully commonplace structures of bricks and mortar, endeavouring to the best of our ability to argue ourselves out of

our inveterate dislike for such ugly things, for it was our aim to try and look on the bright side of life, and, as we could not alter existing facts, to make the best of them. It must be confessed that the country labourer lives a hard life, working early and late, with few comforts and little ease; and who would not wish him all and every improvement to his lot, even though the landscape may suffer by his benefit? But is it of necessity, I wonder, that progress should always mean a sacrifice of beauty? If so, we must accept the inevitable with as good a grace as may be. I, for one—lover of the beautiful though I am—can forgive the cotter's home being ugly if he is better off in his ugly cottage (even the very adjective seems out of place with the noun, so accustomed are we to associate a cottage with the picturesque), but I can never forgive nor excuse a rich man for spoiling scenery; for, given the necessary money, beautiful buildings can be as readily raised as costly eye-sores.

Presently we reached a bit of wild common, wind-swept and sunny: here the landscape opened out, affording us a sense of space and freedom. These rough grassy expanses, that so specially abound in this portion of England—gay with golden gorse or flowering broom, purple with heather now and again, the home of waving bracken, with their stunted thorns, countless plants, flowers, and weeds (all beautiful, to even the despised weeds), forming as they do a wild harmony of greys and golds, of reds and russet greens—contrast delightfully with the enclosed cultivated fields around, and hedge-bound

lanes. A bit of primæval England in the midst of highly cultivated ground—the very antithesis of an oasis in a desert! Bits of wayward Nature, across which broad masses of shade and sunshine come and go, for the skyscape above is wide and unbroken; and how unrestrained the bracing breezes sweep over them, fresh and invigorating, wandering whither they will at their own sweet pleasure. What perfect playgrounds they make for the ruddy-cheeked, ragged, sunburnt children, who laugh and romp about upon them to their hearts' content! Happy careless creatures, how different your lot to the little ragamuffins of our large cities, who only have the thronged streets, or a narrow dirty court, in which to make merry! Would that every hamlet possessed such a miniature 'health resort.' Even to the passing wayfarer—

> A common overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
> Yields no unpleasant ramble.

What pictures these rough commons afford to the eye, love-trained to perceive the beauties in which they abound, unheeded wayside commons though they be! Not all the laboured wares that grace and sometimes disgrace the Academy walls ever revealed such a boundless store of loveliness. Why will not painters give us weeds as well as flowers, nettles as well as daisies? Do they imagine that they know better than Nature how the world should be? Most British weeds are full of character:

A BIT OF WILD SURREY.

ST. GEORGE, HANOVER SQUARE
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

take the thistle, for instance—it is more varied in form, and possesses a greater individuality, than the much esteemed rose.

These commons, too: how thoroughly English they are, with their cackling flocks of waddling geese, their stray donkeys, romping urchins!—even the inevitable clothes-line with the linen blowing wildly about lends life and movement to the scene. And what can be more picturesque than a gipsies' encampment thereon (a by no means rare sight), the smoke from the camp-kettle, an azure film upward curling so slowly and peacefully—surely the very poetry of smoke this, for even smoke in the country can be beautiful.

Pulling up, then, at one of these old commons that set our thoughts a-wandering thus, we observed a road to the left, which appeared to lead into the heart of a rich woodland country. How inviting it looked, seeming almost to beg of us to explore it. We felt that we could not resist its attractions, the more especially as the road ahead gave few promises of scenic revelations. So we called a halt, and got our map and road-book from out the boot: not to decide as to which way we would take—for we had made up our minds already in that matter—but simply to gather some idea whither the by-road would take us. For, to confess the fact, so delightfully and fetterless free were we, so strangely unlike the ordinary traveller in this respect, that when commencing our stage in the morning we had not the remotest notion as to where our evening's quarters would be. We drove away southward, that

was all; for we were not 'doing' any particular tourist round, nor, I am thankful to say, completing any definite itinerary, but rather, like the more famous Dr. Syntax, we were holiday-making in search of the picturesque; so we elected, for that day at any rate, that we would take those roads that seemed to us the most attractive and promised to afford the pleasantest wanderings.

A short glance at the map sufficed us. From this we discovered that the road would take us to Edenbridge—surely from its name that should be a charming spot!—and beyond this we observed Hever Castle, of historic renown, marked upon the map; and still beyond this again Penshurst Place, the ancient home of the Sidneys. What more good things could we desire? What an envious programme was ours that day—beautiful scenery, with old associations agreeably combined!

A country full of all manner of pleasantness it was we passed through. Doubly beautiful did it appear on that bright summer morning: a peace and gentleness seemed to rest over all the landscape—a dreamy landscape it was, all bathed in the soft golden sunshine. The distant woods were motionless, the leaves of the near trees that overhung our way were still as painted ones—they forgot even to tremble in the windless air; the cattle in the meadows sought the shelter of the overhanging foliage, standing there quite *à la* Sidney Cooper, contentedly chewing the cud and whisking their tails ever and again to keep the tormenting flies away. But though the day was

warm, the branching trees along our way afforded us a grateful shade. The balmy air suggested Southern lands ; a slumberous silence rested on all around, broken only by the songs of birds and droning hum of bees. A peaceful English pastoral, beautiful beyond the power of pen and ink to realise—the nearest approach to an Arcadian ideal the world can show, or mind of man imagine.

A happy-looking English country this—a land of rural delights, where the old homes, built generations long ago, suggest only domestic contentment and unambitious prosperity. A land of fresh green meadows carelessly mingled with red-tinted ploughed fields and bird-beloved woods, with here and there a grey weathered farmhouse, with its little colony of outbuildings grouped around anyhow, and upon that very account charmingly irregular and picturesque ; and now and again as we went along a straggling hamlet came into view. A happy land, where no one seems in a hurry, where people make haste slowly, and where the tide of modern progress seems hardly to have flowed at all.

A tree-sheltered grassy nook—close by which a little purling stream just broke the rural silence with its liquid melody, its tiny waters being spanned by a rustic wooden bridge—tempted us to stop and rest awhile, so cool and grateful did it appear, evidently existing for the sake of the wayworn traveller. We could not resist it—that little footbridge must be sketched ; in truth it was a ready-made picture, only waiting for some one to come and paint it. There it stood, with the green trees

above, with peeps beyond of the blue sky through their interwoven branches; and below, through their stems, a corner of a hayfield was revealed, looking for all the world like a bit cut out of one of Birket Foster's pictures. So we set up our easel and commenced work, and a pretty sketch it made. A country lassie came along just when wanted, and at our request obligingly posed herself whilst we drew her looking over the railing.

Somehow, if the painter only waits, these natural figures always seem to come to him: at least, I have generally found such to be the case, and seldom have I failed to secure a suitable figure thus some time during the progress of my picture? Better far these, than figures breathing of the studio, which look what they are—added figures studiously posed; models merely—in the composition truly, but not belonging to it. The little maiden, after inspecting herself in the painting, proudly proceeded on her way, remarking before she left 'that I never imagined any one would care to take my picture.' Would they! Unaffected little lassie! I should be only too delighted to have the chance of sketching you again.

After she was gone, a boy came whistling along carrying a basket over his arm. Of course he at once made for us—boys always do. But by a little diplomacy we made him of use to us, converting a nuisance into a blessing. We induced him to stand and have his 'portrait took too;' nor, by the way, did he require much persuasion. And, shall I confess it?—we placed him looking up and making

love to the little 'bonnie lassie.' I hope she will forgive the liberty we took.

The boy naturally insisted upon seeing himself before he departed on his errand (I am afraid it took him a long while to complete this), and he graciously expressed his entire satisfaction with our representation of himself, and, moreover, was pleased to remark that his 'father would be right glad to see the picture. You might show it to him if you loikes; he lives at the first cottage over yonder'—pointing indefinitely somewhere across the fields—'he'll be away at work now, but he'll be home maybe in a hour or so. Perhaps you wouldn't mind waiting just to show it him; he's moighty fond of coloured drawings, that he be!' We expressed our fear that, as we had far to go that day, we should be unable to wait, even for the pleasure of showing the 'coloured drawing' to his father. We, however, gave him a sixpence for standing for a model, which caused him further to remark that 'If ever you bees this way again, just you call at that cottage, and I'll stand for you as long as ever you loikes.'

Just as we had packed away our sketching paraphernalia, we observed a man coming along the road, wheeling before him a peculiar kind of carriage—a box-like structure mounted upon four bicycle-wheels. He raised our curiosity as to who or what he could be, and the object of his travelling thus. Was he, like ourselves, making a pilgrimage along the English roads, wheeling his belongings with him in this strange fashion? Hardly anything

would surprise us in these days of surprises. He was dressed in a grey tweed suit, was clean-shaven, had an intellectual face, and might be a gentleman or not. Was this some new and uncomfortable way of touring? We felt bound to address him and, if possible, to satisfy our curiosity; so, as an excuse to open up a conversation, we made the very pertinent remark that 'It's very warm to-day.' What would Englishmen do, I wonder, without the weather to talk about?—in this respect it is a good thing that we possess a changeable climate. I remember once, long ago, when I was much younger, I had got into the habit of remarking, 'What a beautiful day it is!' and thoughtlessly repeated the commonplace phrase whilst paying a visit; and it was only when my friend looked at me in wonderment, that I suddenly recalled to mind the obvious fact that it was in reality pouring with rain! However, we made no such mistake this time, for the weather was unmistakably hot; and the stranger who had puzzled us so came to a halt and appeared nothing loth to rest and have a chat. He proved to be a very talkative and communicative individual, so that we had merely to listen to learn all we required.

He himself it was, after our first challenge, who opened the ball. 'I know what you are thinking about,' he said: 'you are wondering what I can be, wheeling my little carriage before me; everybody I meet wonders.' Evidently, we thought to ourselves, we have come across a regular character; and we rejoiced at the fact. People endeavour so successfully to be as much like one another as possible in

these days of uniformity that a genuine character is a delightful change from the even monotony of multitudes.

'Now,' he continued after a pause, 'I don't fancy that you would ever guess what I am: I'm a photographer. I've got all my apparatus, camera and so forth, stowed away in that'—pointing to the peculiar structure on wheels. 'Yes, I'm very proud of it; it's unique; designed it all myself and, what's more, made it. Now I'll just show you how compactly everything is packed away; not an inch of room lost, and I could lay my hand upon anything in the dark, which in my profession I very often have to do.' Then, after showing us the interior arrangements and 'dodges' of his 'cycle-carriage,' as he called it, he proceeded with his remarks. 'There now, I flatter myself that's hard to beat for convenience or portability. I've half a mind to take a patent out for it, only I'm afraid it's not just the sort of article everybody would require. "There's the rub," as the poet says. Was it Shakespeare? I'm blest if I can remember, but I always put down doubtful quotations to him.' Rather hard on Shakespeare, we thought.

After another brief pause, our character recommenced his remarks. 'Do you know,' he began, 'some people think I'm a fool; but I don't agree with them. That's not saying much perhaps, for few men deem themselves fools, I should imagine. Why, the most stupid fellow I ever knew thought he was a rare genius, wrote poetry by the yard, and died in the workhouse. Poetry's a bad thing to get a living at. But I've not told you why people think me a fool.

Well, I could, when I was a young man, have been a clerk in a wholesale druggist's, earned my hundred pounds a year, and been a gentleman. I tried it for a year. But I was not made to sit in an office worrying over figures all day long—I was too fond of the country and freedom; so I threw it up, put aside all idea of being a gentleman, and took to photography. That's why my friends called me a fool. But I enjoy my free life, and what more can a man be than happy? Yes, I've been at it fifteen years now. I get away from London early every summer, and go wheeling it about through the country. I'm off to Hastings now, then on to Dover next perhaps, and so round by the coast to Margate. I love moving about, it's a delightful life in the summer; but the winter beats me. I coin money at the seaside taking nurses and children, groups and animals; but that's the worst part of the work. Nurses are hard to satisfy, and children difficult to do, but groups beat all: if there are six people, one is almost sure to move; and, even if you are successful otherwise, one of the number again is sure not to be pleased. But I like the country best. I about manage to pay my way on the road, taking the people in the villages, houses, and so forth. My camera and lens are really good ones: I don't believe in the cheapness of inferior tools. I had a little windfall the other day. I was taking a portrait of the keeper at the lodge-gate of Lord Dash's, when he says, 'Why, here comes his lordship;' so, as I had a plate ready, I took a shot at him instantaneously as he came along. It was a lucky shot: I got the old gentleman natural as life on his

favourite horse, so I printed one and sent it up to the house, and I was ordered up there the next day to take a lot of photographs.' And so the strange conversation rattled on apace.

Our communicative friend then asked, evidently with an eye to business, if we would permit him to take our horses? 'They would make a pretty picture in the road there, and I should like to take them just to show you what I can do.' So we allowed him to have his way, not revealing till afterwards that we also had a photographic apparatus with us, and did a little in his line as well. Upon our friend learning this, he positively declined to accept any payment whatever for his work, and moreover gave us some valuable hints, for which we were duly grateful. The photograph which he took and presented to us was a positive on a plate of a kind, as he told us, especially prepared for him, and a very pleasing picture it was; and we kept it as a memento of our meeting. These chance characters one meets by the way lend a special interest to a tour like ours. The speedy and prosaic railway has robbed us of these little incidents of travel.

To realise to the utmost the full enjoyment of the road, not only must there be a true love for Nature, but the power of sympathising with those you are thrown in contact with from time to time; whether it be a farmer leaning over a gate, be he jovial or otherwise, a chance acquaintance *en route*, mine good host or hostess at mine inn, or fellow travellers in the coffee-room thereat, a wayside cottager, stray shepherd, or even a passing labourer,

and last, but not least, the ostler who helps to groom and see after the wants of your horses. This last much, and I think unjustly, abused individual often turns out, according to my experience, to be a character in his way, and not unfrequently will be found to possess a fund of information and anecdotes, local or otherwise, well worth listening to. Nor is he as a rule wanting in traditions of past times, when, as he will tell you, 'he heard his father say as how over twenty coaches a day used to change at the old inn, besides posters. Both curious and entertaining are some of his stories, if you can gain his confidence and persuade him to relate them for your special benefit; though some of his legends must be accepted *cum grano salis*. His worst fault is an irredeemable one, I fear—his stories are over-long, for he will relate them in his provokingly roundabout way or not at all.

Indeed, it is surprising how much romance, even in the present matter-of-fact age, you may gather from those whom chance may bring you in contact with each day, when journeying in the old-fashioned way by road, and whom at first you might deem to be essentially prosaic and commonplace. Therefore it was that we let slip no opportunity of conversing with those we came across who appeared at all interesting or likely to impart any local or particular information. For however wise in his generation a town-dweller may be, or consider himself, it is strange how much of country matters we may learn from even the humble labourer who tills the fields, and how surprised he seems that we do not know

certain things that he is fully cognisant of as a matter of course.

Many a pleasant and instructive hour have we spent gossiping with a simple shepherd on the South Downs, listening to his strange stories, weather-lore, and old traditions handed down from his grandfather's time—endless almost these, at least we never came to an end of them—tinged all with the glamour of the past, and mingled with not a few legends of the smuggling days. Little, though curious the fact may appear, of sheep, however, unless in direct answer to our questions, for these people as a rule do not care to talk of their calling; doubtless it is a relief to them to let their minds wander to other things. Sheep and shepherding they have every day—of such enough and to spare—but strangers seldom. Chats also we had with clergymen, farmers, haymakers, fishermen, carriers, ay, and ploughmen even, with the numerous other not-to-be-catalogued people one is continually coming across in the course of a day's drive in rural England.

After our long wayside halt and gossip, we proceeded on our journey, not forgetting to bid our entertaining photographer good-bye, nor neglecting to thank him for the picture of our horses. On past pleasant hop-fields our road led us—more beautiful these by far than any vineyards; but then the vines are abroad, so they possess the undoubted merit of being foreign, and therefore they extort our praises for their lesser beauties; for whoever deems the every-day commonplace English hop-fields worthy of admiration, or more than a passing glance? They are

at home with us always, and merely ordinary hop-fields. Why will people not see the beauties at their own door? Why will they travel far and long, and grow enraptured over far less picturesque spots, just because they are distant and cost time, trouble, and money to reach? Why?

At one spot we passed a picturesque mill to the left of our road, that almost tempted us to make another halt in order to sketch it; but we had already spent too much time thus: the morning had grown into midday, and we had yet many miles of country to traverse before we should reach our night's destination. So we had to be content with a colourless photograph of the spot—still a something to remember it by.

Presently we reached Edenbridge, a slumberous little town. Its name struck us as being the most attractive thing about it; but I may be unjust, one can hardly judge of a place from a passing glance. Here we noticed an old inn, with its time-honoured sign swinging from a beam stretched right across the road in the good old-fashioned manner; so the traveller could not well pass this hostel by unnoticed. But we resisted its plain invitation and rested not, though I verily believe the horses knew right well that we were passing an inn, for they both showed an unmistakable desire to turn into the courtyard: long experience at road work had given them a sort of intuitive faculty of discerning such places. But though they showed such an evident desire for a bait, and though we felt it hard to disappoint them, we stopped not; for historic Hever was now only a few

miles away, and we trusted to kind Fortune, who so rarely failed us, to provide an accommodating hostelrie there. On this occasion, however, she treated us shabbily; but it mattered not so much after all, for we were unable, to our great regret, to view the interior of the old castle. But I am anticipating.

What a pretty country it was on to Hever. We were passing right through the heart of the Weald of Kent ('weald,' from 'wald' or 'wold,' Anglo-Saxon for a wooded country), a well-cultivated valley now, erst a wild woody waste, the abode of wolves and other undesirable beasts. But times are changed. Though still to some extent possessing its timbered character, it is now a rich and fertile district, smiling with prosperity, dotted with countless happy homes, made lovely and humanised by the tireless toil of centuries.

At a portion of our stage we came across a sight that did not delight us—a railway just constructing. The engineering works of this sadly marred the scenery, and cut up the roadway, so that the travelling was very rough. The fresh embankments, mere mounds of brown earth, grassless and bare, were a blot upon the fair landscape—one from which, however much it might desire, the vision could not escape. An old railway, on which Time has done his best to mellow its harsher features down, is at the best not a pleasing feature in a pretty country; a new one is utterly graceless, most eye-irritating in its effect. Yes, a recently constructed railway, with its assertive straight lines, scarred banks, big cuttings, matter-of-fact bridges (these, alas! nowadays girder ones,

and of the ugly ugly), is strikingly out of harmony with the mellowed look and soft repose of all else around.

But in due time we bade farewell to the unbeautiful iron way, and once more only the picturesque prevailed. Then we arrived at Hever village. There was the church on the top of the hill right before us; but we saw no castle, so we drove up to the old fane, and there in the valley that lay spread out panoramically before us, stood the grey old pile, burdened with the weight of centuries, weather-worn and stained, a fitting relic of the feudal past. It came upon us suddenly, a delightful scenic surprise, with the stilly woods around, and little winding river twining in and out of the sunny landscape like a shining silver ribbon, bounded all by hazy blue hills.

A strange place in which to build a castle it appeared at first to us, when the commanding church-crowned height seemed far more suitable for such a structure. But in the days of old, before cannon were conceived, the moat was the great aim of the builders of these edifices : this formed the first line of defence, and in those days a formidable one. And as a moat necessitates water, so this stern stronghold was placed in a hollow by the peaceful Eden river, to ensure a never-failing supply of this commodity, and also that, being thus lowly placed, the moat could not easily, if at all, be drained by any besiegers. At least, such were the conclusions we came to as to the cause of its situation. A moat, of course, with the drawbridge kept raised, prevented the possibility of any successful sudden attack.

Chiddingstone Village

CHAPTER IV.

Hever Castle—A History in Stone—A Repulse—Show Houses—Questionable Enterprise—'The British Bluebeard'—Travelling in the Olden Times—Wild Flowers—Which Way?—Scotch Firs—A Village of Old Timbered Houses—A Residence on the Move!—Rural Hostelries—Penshurst—One of the Stately Homes of England—Characters to be met at Country Inns—The Poetry of the Past—Exploring An Old-time Hostel—A Hilly Road—Speldhurst.

Leaving the church, we drove down a steep hill, at the foot of which stands Hever Castle. This ancient feudal structure, what memories does it not recall! It is a bit of England of the past, more like a picture than a place, its hoary crumbling walls telling plainly the story of the changes and chances of its long life's history. It is a tale in stone, a romance in building, a most picturesque combination of Tudor mullioned windows, gables, grey battlements, time-toned turrets and broken towers, fittingly crowned by its stern weather-worn castellated approach, with its gateway, portcullis, and machicolations above. A grim old pile, hallowed by ancient love-legend, for what Dorothy Vernon is to Haddon, Anne

Boleyn is to Hever. Why is Haddon so famous, so tourist-besieged, and Hever, in all respects equally interesting, so comparatively neglected? Of the two I prefer Hever—it does not give one so much the impression of a show place.

Alighting from the phaeton at the outer gate, we observed a notice-board with the inscription, 'The castle is shown on Wednesdays only.' Now it happened not to be that particular day of the week, which was unfortunate; but, taking our card-case with us, we ventured over the ancient bridge which spans the sluggish moat, and, stopping at the great gateway—the very one that King Harry entered by upon his love-making errand: how many years ago?—we rang the bell, which sounded somehow preternaturally loud, in the half-deserted walls of the pile, and then further ventured into the court-yard. What a picture was before us! All seemed so antiquated, so breathing of the past. Was it possible, we could not help asking ourselves, that we were really in this nineteenth century of steam and electricity, glare and glitter and modern restlessness?

Presently a servant made her appearance, and we sent in our card, explaining that we were on a driving tour, apologising on this account for coming on the wrong day, and asking, as a great favour, if we might be allowed to see the rooms that were shown. 'I think so,' said the woman; 'I'll take your card in to the lady and ask.' So we were left alone hopefully anticipating that our request would be granted. But it was not to be; for the servant returned, saying, 'The lady was very sorry, but the

castle was only shown on Wednesdays, and to-day, you know, is not Wednesday.' We could not impeach the accuracy of the fact, and, as the servant said those were her instructions, there was nothing for it but to lothfully walk away. Just as we were leaving she remarked, 'You may see as much of the outside as you like,' so we wandered round about the exterior of the old pile, grateful for even this concession.

It was very tantalising, being there with so much that was attractive within reach, and yet not able to see it. But, however annoying, what real right had we to complain? Is not every Englishman's house his castle; and ought we not rather to be grateful that the owners of these old historic piles allow permission to view them on any condition to the outside public?

A propos of show houses: some years ago, whilst on a visit to an old moated manor-house within a drive of a much-frequented watering-place, the worthy owner told me an amusing story. It would appear that a certain cabman of that town made a kind of specialty of driving out his fares and showing them the old house. It was a little mine of wealth to him, as the excursion was a long one, and the journey practically took up the day, the charge being of course accordingly. The owner of the fine old mansion at last became so tired of the continual coming of strangers, that he requested the cabman not to intrude with his fly full of excursionists any more, as it entailed trespassing, and he had no ambition to make a show place of his house. For the next week or so our

friend was left to enjoy his home unmolested. But one day, to his astonishment, he observed the veritable old cabman coolly proceeding as usual up his avenue with a carriage full of trippers. Mr. —— (I do not wish to point out any particular person; perhaps even our friend was not a plain 'Mr.,' but no matter)—Mr. —— then happened at the time to be out of sight, seated sketching behind a bush, and before he could recover from his surprise at the impudent assurance of the enterprising 'cabby,' he overheard the following conversation. 'But, driver, are you quite sure that we are not trespassing? are the public allowed to go right up to the house?' To which natural query the conscientious Jehu made reply, 'Oh yes, sir; Mr. —— is so proud of people coming to see his place. He likes me to bring them!'

I know that some people think it ill-natured when such permission is refused, but I cannot see what right they have to be displeased. Surely every man should have the power of enjoying his home in privacy and peace, if he so desire. I must confess, so selfish am I, that upon one occasion when paying a visit to a house where 'the pictures were shown' in the various rooms each day to any one who could send in a piece of cardboard with a name thereon (not a difficult task), I found the many sightseers, more brought by curiosity than love of art, anything but a delight, and this although I was but a temporary guest. Frankly, I must confess that I could not have stood for long this intrusion upon my quietude. I like to enjoy my home, without

strangers I know nothing about making a sort of peepshow of it. So, though at first rather inclined to mutter to ourselves ill-natured remarks, on due consideration we felt that we had no right to complain of our refusal. Perhaps some other day we may see the interior of this interesting old place, for we will be careful, if we are in this part of the world again, to come upon the appointed day. Of course, driving about country the traveller has to take his chance in this respect; one cannot make the days always fit in as one would.

Still, with all our disappointment, the exterior of Hever was to us full of interest, and possibly on the whole better worth seeing than the few antique chambers that are shown within.

Hever was originally built by the Hevres, a Norman family, who, however, failed to make a history for themselves, and eventually died out. Afterwards it was purchased by Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, in the reign of Henry VI.; the grandson of this Sir Geoffrey, one Sir Thomas, was the father of the famous Anne. Here it was that the burly King Harry, 'the British Bluebeard,' came to woo the renowned beauty; and tradition states that upon the occasions of his visits buglers were stationed in advance on the road, to herald his approach. So bad were the ways then, that it is related the king more than once had to send to the castle for assistance.

It may not be generally known that the long staffs that footmen still occasionally carry behind carriages are survivals of stout poles, without which a gentleman's 'coach' in olden times never travelled.

These were employed to extricate the conveyance out of the deep mud-holes that the early roads so abounded in. It was by no means a rare occurrence, we are told, for a carriage then to be buried right up to the axle-trees: in those days the poles were for use, not ornament. Speaking of the condition of the highways in the sixteenth century, it is related of a stage of one of Queen Elizabeth's progresses that 'the journey was marvellous for ease and expedition; for such is the *perfect evenness* of the new highway, her highness left the coach only once whilst the hinds and folk of a base sort lifted it on with their poles.' Needless to say that the italics are my own. I am afraid that a driving tour taken in those days would have hardly proved a success; for if such was the 'perfect evenness' of the new highways, what must the unevenness of the old ones have been like?

Hever is a spot one leaves with regret; but still we had to leave it, for the small inn in the village did not seem over-attractive nor to offer a desirable bait for our horses. Leaving Hever, then, the road began to mount, and we struck upon a green lane with branching elms overhead that would not have done discredit to even Devonshire. The high banks along its side were a sight to behold; they were simply covered with a profusion of wildflowers of many different kinds and varying tints. Never do I remember to have come across such a flowery lane before. We could not resist the temptation to descend and gather a nosegay of these; and when we asked ourselves the names of some of those we gathered, we discovered how scandalously ignorant

we were in the matter. Simple wild wayside flowers all, yet how beautiful!

At the top of the rise two roads diverged, one to the right and one to the left. Both appeared equally likely to lead us to our desired destination, so we called a halt to consider which we would take. There was nobody in sight, and unfortunately, for once (a rare occurrence, in justice to their general reliability, I must grant), both our maps and road-book failed us. Somehow there never are signposts in such places: a wise generation reserves them for spots near towns, and where cottages are close at hand, when any one can find his way, or ask at all events.

We waited some little time, and shouted, to see if we could make any one hear, but all to no purpose. There was nothing for it but to trust to luck; so, as both roads appeared equally desirable, we came to the decision that we would take the one that promised to be the easiest driving.

We were high up in the world now, and our horizon was elevated before us, affording us extensive prospects over the Weald of Kent. A very pleasant drive it was through a charming country, well wooded and undulating. Now and again we observed some clumps of Scotch firs —a dark characteristic tree, with its dark green leaves or needles, rich red stems and stately growth, one delightful in a lowland country to look upon, so contrasting to the usual rounded foliage and short trunked trees of pastoral lands.

Then on through a large and beautiful park, lovely and green, as English parks mostly are, set

in which is a formal, stately mansion—formal, yet of service, acting as a foil to enhance the pleasing picturesqueness of all else around.

A sudden turn in the road, and what a revelation! A little village of charming old timbered houses, looking like a bit cut out of a picture—a picturesquely perfect spot, more like an artist's invention than a bit of roadside reality. An ideal hamlet this we had discovered. For the moment we could hardly credit that what was before us was a genuine old English hamlet, and that we were not looking upon a painted scene, or wandering about a board-built imitation of some mediæval street, so much in vogue of late in exhibitions and bazaars. Artificial these to a degree, yet pleasing notwithstanding, for their sham is a real sham—they do not pretend to be what they are not. But ours had a natural workaday liveable appearance that a copy never can possess; not too neat and prim for this everyday world, not designed for effect, but rather the outcome of man's requirements—the result of happy accident.

A charming roadside inn here, half timbered too, as the rest of the buildings, tempted us to halt and bait our horses. Needless to say, the camera was in requisition, securing for us representations of these delightful old houses; and, as good fortune would have it, a carrier's cart came along whilst we were taking one of the photographs, and added greatly to the effect of the picture, for it so chanced to stop just where an artist would have placed it. Some untidy little children—pleasing because so untidy—we endeavoured to get in our view could

not be induced to stand for us, so we had to be content without them. This was the first time and last in our photographic experience of such urchins objecting to be taken ; as a rule, they are only too anxious to be in the picture, and are the bugbear of the poor amateur photographer.

One thing that struck us as strange about the place, was that though we had never been there before it did not seem altogether fresh to us. Somehow we could not help feeling that surely we had seen that gable, that porch, those windows, chimneys, and so forth. But how could this be ? Houses do not go wandering about the country, in this land at least. In America, truly, houses are sometimes moved about, but not in England. I well remember during a visit to Chicago, some years ago now, my utter astonishment, on looking out of my hotel window in the morning, to see a house slowly being moved down the street. It so happened that by some accident this particular house 'got stuck'; and I was much amused some days afterwards at a remark in one of the papers to the effect that 'there were evidently no enterprising citizens in the city just then, or that house would have been burnt down long ago, and not allowed thus to block up the traffic!'

But, to come back to this little quiet English village, thinking over the matter a sudden light came upon us—it was in various picture galleries we had made acquaintance with these picturesque peeps of architecture. Evidently the painters have discovered Chiddingstone. I almost fear to mention

the name of the village, lest by some unhappy chance it should become known and spoilt.

Well do I remember a charming old-fashioned inn, somewhere in Wales, beloved of artists and fishermen, that has at last been discovered by tourists, and has consequently blossomed forth into an hotel with nothing old-fashioned about it. How many happy days had I not spent at that rural hostel before the regrettable discovery, sketching and fishing, feeling myself more of a guest there than a stranger, the living excellent and the charges nominal. Good-naturedly and innocently I told all my friends of my 'find'; they in turn told theirs, and now—well, never mind, I am wiser now.

I know still of more than one rural hostelrie, clean, comfortable, and cosy, in which I feel quite at home away from home, where I can chat with the landlord in the evening over my pipe, or not, as I choose, and where the kind-hearted landlady is cook as well as hostess, and takes a motherly interest in my welfare; but my nearest and dearest friend could not wrench from me, even in my most confiding humour, the secret whereabouts of one of these. Were they able to do so, I know full well, by sad experience, that those comfortable and unpretending hostelries would not long remain what they are.

On to Penshurst we had a delightful stage, passing through a country truly English. Our inn there left nothing to be desired; and so ended one of the most agreeable drives we ever had.

Penshurst is a pleasant spot. It is situated in the midst of a beautiful country; the village has a

picturesque appearance, with its old houses (half timbered) and gentlemen's residences around, each in their well-wooded grounds, revealing to the passer-by peeps of gable ends and clustering stacks of chimneys almost drowned in foliage. For once the past and the present are in harmony; still, as ever, the past is the most pleasing. These old houses, humble though they are, possess some history; their time-stained walls tell of another day, of generations long departed: people have been born and died, have made merry and suffered within them; the new abodes have yet their associations to make.

Strolling round about the place, we found ourselves wandering towards the churchyard, a spot we generally make for—a doleful one, perhaps, still a spot that nearly always repays a visit. The entrance to this is beneath an ancient house that forms a kind of archway; a house whose beams are bent and black with age, or age and dirt together, I do not know. It certainly forms a most unique approach to the church.

Penshurst Place—the shrine of the Kentish pilgrim, the stately home of the gallant Sidneys, and of Sir Philip Sidney in particular, the noblest of the line—is of course above all else of paramount interest here. An old English home, whose very walls are histories, its great hall hung with armour, with its wide, open, oaken roof, and windows of 'Kentish tracery,' its venerable portraits, its ancient furniture —'the tables and benches in the hall, if not contemporaneous with it, are certainly amongst the earliest

pieces of furniture in England'[1]—its flavour of bygone days, its past memories and associations, are beyond my power to describe in prosaic print. Penshurst above all others is a place that must be seen, not described. Besides, what need for me to attempt the task? Has it not already been done over and over again—as well as it can be done, that is? Do not all the guide-books give detailed particulars of the place in a business-like, matter-of-fact manner? The traveller must of course supply the romance, even as a painter puts his soul into his subject.

Rather is it my endeavour to describe little-known places than well-known ones; to discover beauty spots in odd nooks and corners out of the regular tourist path; to bring before my reader pictures both in pen and pencil of ancient coaching inns, pilgrims' hostelries, ancient manor-houses, with all their unwritten histories and suggestive legends, old-world villages, ruined priories—half if not wholly forgotten now that no one (or very few at any rate) explores the byways of his own land—together with the numberless sights, scenes, and incidents that are ever presented in such profusion to the happy wanderer along the pleasant old roads.

During the course of the evening we strolled into the courtyard of our inn, as is our general habit, to see our horses and to pick up any information we might from the ostler or loiterers about. In these old inn yards I smoke a meditative pipe, survey the

[1] From a report of the meeting of the Kent Archæological Society held at Penshurst in 1863.

miniature world around me, and study at my leisure the many different characters that one always comes across in such places. The bar or smoke-room of a country inn is also a favourite resort of mine. Here the traveller may indulge in long-winded chats with the village politicians, or may be a silent listener, if that pleases him better, and thus he may 'see how the town is served.' A traveller who does this will be rewarded by much local information (otherwise unobtainable), strange stories, much country wisdom, besides old-world traditions and curious customs and beliefs,—these linger yet, and are likely to linger for many years to come, in spite of the levelling influences of the matter-of-fact school board.

Simple proverbs have outlived empires; and well it is that it should be so. Sweep away all the gathered legends of centuries, the traditions that have been handed down and implicitly believed from generation to generation—traditions that have made much of this England of ours hallowed haunted ground—her crumbling ruins, sacred memories,—sweep all these away: what terrible losers we should be! Do away with the touching story of Dorothy Vernon and her midnight flight with her 'own true love.' Where would be the poetry of Haddon? And yet there are some legend-proof antiquaries who have striven to prove this delightful bit of romance apocryphal. Do away with the story of Leicester and Amy Robsart, which Scott has made so delightful for us; do away with Tennyson's Fair Rosamond, the legend of Blake playing bowls whilst the Armada was in sight, when he is supposed to

have remarked 'that there was plenty of time to finish the game and thrash the Spaniards too,'—do away with these and the countless others that have gathered around almost every old mansion—the traditions that have become a part of the very history of our land, traditions and curious beliefs that yet abound in nearly every country town or village—such as 'Peeping Tom' of Coventry—and what could compensate us for the loss? Cities and railways we may build, but traditions are a natural growth; age is their necessity; neither prayers nor money will give us these.

So it is in this practical age—we love to dwell on the poetry of the past, which, once improved out of existence, can never be replaced. Therefore, when opportunity availed we delighted to hear all the old legends; we made attentive, willing listeners when the conversation of the country folk turned upon past customs, local proverbs, or time-honoured beliefs. But to become acquainted with these the traveller must appear to credit what is told him; the slightest suspicion of doubt, the faintest suggestion of unreasonableness, and your countryman will abruptly stop his conversation; his self-pride is touched—possibly he deems you are merely listening to make fun of him; and once he feels this, nothing will induce him to take you into his confidence again. It may be that he himself does not believe one half he says, though he would have you credit all, very probably; still he does not like to feel that you consider him either foolish or wanting in knowledge. He takes a pride in relating what his grandfather has

told him, handed down from his fathers in turn, and you will be well rewarded when you run across a character such as this if you can lead him on to impart to you some of his treasure-store of unrecorded traditions.

Leaving Penshurst, collar work commenced at once, and a stiff mount it was; and, looking back, an ever-widening landscape displayed itself. When driving by road, especially when ascending a hill, it is worth while to give a glance behind every now and again: often a wholly different and unexpected prospect will thus be discovered; by doing so you double the scenic beauties of a journey.

At the top of the mount, a leafy lane, cool, green, and shady, which promised pleasant wandering, tempted us to explore it. Truly we knew not where it would lead; but what matter? Had we not the whole day before us, and was it not the special advantage of our mode of travel that we were perfectly free to go whither we would, to stop where we chose, to loiter or make haste just as our mood inclined or it seemed best to us? All England was before us; ours was a planless expedition; the very fact that we did not know from day to day where we should be relieved us for the time from the worry of letters or telegrams; we had no haunting fear of one of the latter calling us suddenly back to town boredom and spoiling our outing. We were as free in this respect as though we were making a sea voyage So we accepted the unwritten invitation, and without even consulting our map drove down the narrow lane. And well it was we did; for

though the way was rough, and never could seem quite to make up its mind to go straight to anywhere, and though it gave us many stiff climbs, our reward was great, for it took us right into the heart of an old-world country—a part of the land that gave us a feeling of remoteness, a sense as though we had somehow stepped back some two centuries, so primitive and unsophisticated it was. There is one thing about the railways, they keep all the progress to themselves; away from them old England is much the same as it was long years ago, and this is something to be thankful for.

What a delightful lane that was, with its tangled hedgerows, grass-grown margins that seemed jealous of the roadway, and over-arching trees above! Had any one been suddenly placed there, and was not told where he was, I feel sure that he would have guessed Devonshire. Small blame to him either, for even that county of green lanes could scarcely produce a prettier one. It boasted of none of your trim hedges or shrouded trees; these were of a careless natural growth, and beyond we caught glimpses of sunny meadows and leafy woods. Our way turned out a very hilly and a very crooked one; but we would not have had it otherwise, for are not hilly roads and winding ones the most beautiful? Truly ours that morning twisted about in a most delightfully perplexing manner. I say delightfully perplexing, for as we were bound nowhere we rather rejoiced in its capriciousness. Up and down hill it went, suddenly turning at an abrupt angle when we least expected it; more than once we

looked ahead, and hazarded a guess as to whither it would lead, but somehow it always managed to do the very reverse to what we anticipated. Such a byway, in our estimation, is a *beau idéal* one for those who love to explore out-of-the-way spots, leading one as they do into remote, unfrequented parts.

Somehow we felt a presentiment that this secluded rural lane would reveal something to us not to be found every day, nor to be discovered on the main highways, and our presentiment proved true. Exactly why this strange feeling came over us I cannot say, but so it did. Possibly it was only the outcome of a probability, as our way promised to lead us into the very heart of an old-world land, in which relics of the past were likely to exist.

Nor did our way keep its promises long unfulfilled. Right at the bottom of the first hill, in a wooded hollow, facing us, we came across a charming bit of ancient architecture—an old inn, grey with years, a half-timbered structure with two great gables, joined together by a four-sided smaller gabled erection. A most delightfully original and quaint bit of past-time work; a something one would hardly expect to find out of a picture. Alas! what a pity it is that so many of these curious buildings should have been destroyed; and what a reproach to know that it is, as an almost invariable rule, man's hand, not that of time, that has wrought the mischief. Upon this ancient hostelrie (now in its latter evil days merely a wayside public) the date of 1593 is still plainly visible in curious figures; and beneath this, upon a space between the beams,

below a long window—leaden lattice like the rest—were two V's joined together so as to form a W; these again were united by a letter that we could not make much of, unless intended for a Q turned upside down. On one side of these initials so curiously combined is E T A, on the other 69.

But I need not waste time upon a word description of this quaint little unpretending inn, three centuries old now all but six years, as I have given a sketch of it, which will better explain what manner of place it is than pages of print. What a help, by the way, the pencil is to the pen! How often have I not pitied those untrained in drawing, who, wishing to bring before me the chief points of some particular scene, or clear up some complicated point, have failed in their endeavours, when they might have so easily made all things plain by the magic aid of a few lines. A five minutes' sketch will afford more information upon such matters than a volume of close writing. Both pen and pencil separately have their limits; allied, there is nothing that is capable of being conveyed to the understanding that they cannot convey. My little five-year-old daughter can better often explain herself with the pencil than by mouth. Somehow children all seem born with a love of drawing. Paper is cheap enough; what a pity it is that this most useful and natural talent is not encouraged, instead of so often being discouraged as mere scribbling.

A hilly road was now our lot, one worthy of Derbyshire in this respect, rivalling in romantic beauty even those of that county of scenery. As

OLD INN, POUND'S BRIDGE, KENT.

ST. GEORGE, HANOVER SQUARE
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we rose so the atmosphere grew lighter. The day was hot; and though the shady lanes sheltered us from the warm sunshine, they also robbed us of what little breeze there was. Up and up we went through a wooded country, with peeps downwards between the thick foliage of the trees of gleaming pools of water, glistening out from the dark green gloom. Doubtless these pools were in times past constructed to supply the requisite water-power for forging or other mills. It almost seems to be forgotten now that this part of England, and Sussex in particular, was once the seat of a flourishing and busy iron industry, for the age at any rate. Of which more anon, as we shall presently come upon some specimens of Sussex ironwork.

Reaching more level ground, we passed through Speldhurst, a picturesque village with another half-timbered inn, more important but not so quaint externally as the one at Pounds Bridge. It possesses, however, an old-fashioned room upstairs worthy of inspection. Then we rejoiced in a long stretch of level trotting road: the change of pace from the slow, toilsome climbing and cautious descending was a relief. The very fact of driving along a country road at a good pace is a pleasure of itself. I am speaking generally of a phaeton (a coach is of course delightful; but few people, alas! have the opportunity of this supreme happiness), for in a phaeton of carriage you have an uninterrupted view all round, and are sufficiently high to see over the hedges that bound the highway. The pleasant pace and easy swing of the carriage are

most agreeable and exhilarating; travelling so, it is almost impossible to be down-spirited. Spinning thus at a merry pace along a good road through a pretty country with the unknown before you, the varying landscape continually opening out, fresh scenes ever taking the place of those gone by, is the best cure for depression of spirits, or *ennui*, it is possible to conceive. As a healthful and thorough change from town life, there are few things more beneficial to the overwrought brain than a driving tour. You are out in the open air all day long, and this is one of Nature's finest tonics; moreover, on a driving tour you have a constant variety of climates, the mind is pleasantly occupied by all it sees, there is plenty to engage the attention; and still again—and not the least important this—you are free from all the worry of luggage, you have no trains to catch or miss, no wearying waiting in railway stations, no booked places to secure—places that may be already engaged—you are master of your time as to departing from your hotel in the morning, or stopping anywhere you please *en route*. Surely this is the very perfection of travel!

Still harping upon the advantages of a driving tour, it must be remembered that such an outing by no means necessitates constant riding in a carriage. Indeed, contradictory though such an assertion may appear, I may here say that we did most of our driving tour on foot. All the glad day long we were wandering about thus, now resting here and there, now admiring the view, again taking a sketch or photograph, or chatting with a chance wayfarer; or

still again, for a change, exploring an inviting foot-path, but always with the pleasant knowledge that whenever we might feel at all tired the phaeton was at our command. This of course meant also that our sketching things, photographic instruments, waterproofs, road-books, and so forth were at our service at any moment. Indeed, we most happily combined the delights of a pedestrian tour with the comfort of having a carriage ever at our disposal should we happen to feel at all tired or wish to hurry over comparatively uninteresting ground.

Roadside Cottages

A Sixteenth Century House

CHAPTER V.

A Picturesque Farmstead—Poverty: the Ideal and the Real—The Village Green—Great Things and Small—Tunbridge Wells—Guide-book Beauties—A Region of Landscape—Old Roads—A Wise Engineer—The Land of Windmills—A Chat with a Miller—At a Village Inn—Undiscovered Sussex—Mayfield—A Visit to an Old Palace—St. Dunstan's Anvil and Tongs—St. Dunstan's Well—Relics—Why Tunbridge Waters are Chalybeate—Ancient Houses—Guide-book Facts.

Not only had we an excellent road on leaving Speldhurst, but the scenery was as beautiful as the way was good. As we drove along we passed some charming cottages, covered with creepers, whose little gardens showed a love for flowers. Happy cotters, to dwell in such pleasant homes! Your lot is not always so blest. On, too, past comfortable-looking farmhouses; one especially I remember now, which, with its weather-beaten red-tiled outbuildings, its dove or pigeon cote (for use, not ornament), its beehives and 'careless ordered' garden, formed such a pretty picture that we could not resist stopping to

sketch it. A look there was everywhere of quiet prosperity, pleasing to the eye because so suggestive of comfort and contentment. Even the very humblest cottage on our way partook of this prosperous look. An ideal land it seemed to be—one where such a thing as struggling want was utterly unknown.

Such outward appearances of wellbeing cannot fail to exert a cheerful influence upon the traveller, if he has a heart at all, and provided he takes the slightest interest in toiling humanity. Only in pictures is poverty picturesque, for in these the artist carefully conceals from us the miseries of the poor; he touches only upon the pathetic side of want; he discreetly disguises the wretched reality. He gives us the poetry of need, not its misery. There is of course some truth in the story he tells, but it is not the whole truth. It is the painter's art and privilege to elevate. In even a simple pastoral scene (where, if anywhere, all things should appear pleasing), in order to produce a real picture he is obliged to hide away much of the existing commonplace—the mechanical division of the fields, the wire fences, the hateful iron sheds, dirt, and other stern facts. Who would look upon, or care to possess, a painting containing such truths? Thus it is an artist idealises facts: he brings before us a world of his own, he invests with a glamour of poetry our prosaic everyday life, by ignoring or subduing what is mean or trivial, and emphasising the beautiful.

Journeying on in a delightful daydream, we suddenly came upon a spreading village, built in a charmingly irregular manner round a large green. On

this wide space the rustic lads were hard at work at play, intently serious over a rural cricket match, striving for the mastery as earnestly as though the fate of empires depended upon the result. Was it not Wellington who said that 'all his victories were won upon the playground'? The men who fought so doggedly and well on many a hard-contested field had learnt how to struggle and conquer upon the village green.

A wheelwright's cottage here, with fallen timber around, some old waggons repairing, some past all work, half hidden with weeds and briars, again tempted us to add still another drawing to our sketch-book; and we were allowed to make it in peace, for so intent were the inhabitants upon the important cricket match, that even the rare sight of an artist's easel did not tempt a single spectator away.

How rural England, and English villages in particular, abounds in subjects for the brush—homely subjects all, yet full of a subtle poetry worthy of the most skilful artist who is not above little things; if such can rightly be called, for

> There is no great and no small
> To the soul that maketh all;
> And where it cometh all things are,
> And it cometh everywhere.

By no means are the grandest scenes the most pleasing; often, indeed, the reverse. I make bold to say that an average English landscape, homely and homelike, will make a far better picture than the most sublime Alpine scene; for, after all, man is

more than inanimate nature. To me, even an honest ploughman, an unlearned shepherd, the light-hearted farmer's boy are more worthy of the painter's study than simple inert scenery without human interest or associations. The world was made for man, not man for the world ; and has not Millet shown us the nobility of toil, the poetry of the tiller of the fields ?

Now we struck upon an excellent road, wide, well kept ; and though we had purposely neglected to study our maps, we instinctively felt that we were nearing some town or place of importance, and presently we found ourselves in Tunbridge Wells. Somehow this prosperous watering-place pleased us not. The well-dressed throngs, the fashionable carriages, the German bands, big hotels, and showy lodging-houses seemed strangely out of keeping with our homely wandering existence. We were spoilt for towns and crowds. Yet Tunbridge Wells is agreeable enough in itself, with its open breezy common (more health-giving this, we imagined, than its nasty waters), and the wide open prospect that it affords. I think perhaps one reason why we did not care for the place, in spite of all its pleasantness, was that it reminded us much of familiar Hampstead, the common doing duty for the heath, the houses clustering irregularly around it, quite in the manner of the London suburb.

It is curious how, in travelling across country, some places thus impress you. Such feelings are very real, though not always to be analysed or reasoned out. We halted only long enough here

to get a daily paper just to see how the outer world was jogging along, and to purchase a local guide-book for the sake of an excellent map of the surrounding country it contained.

Glancing shortly afterwards over this guide, the first illustration we came across (a full-page one, especially engraved for the work) we discovered, to our astonishment, to be nothing more nor less than a full and detailed view of 'The New Gas-Works.' Truly we live in a utilitarian age! Fancy a hand-book to a picturesque health-resort giving as a prominent illustration a view of a commonplace gas-works! These may be less hideous than the average of such structures—I cannot say, as fortunately we did not see them; but picturesque gas-works— Save the mark! Why, next we shall be having guide-books glowing with the beauties of the Black Country, the charms of Wolverhampton, the pleasant wanderings to be had in romantic Birmingham, the delights of Sheffield, the sweet views of Manchester streets, and the Fates know what else! It has been left for this age of universal progress to discover beauty in ugliness!

Tunbridge Wells is set in the midst of an undulating country. You cannot therefore travel far in any direction without having to encounter a hill more or less severe. So, shortly after leaving the town, we had to contend with the inevitable, and put our horses to a long and tiresome ascent. However, once over the mount the road proved fairly level, and abounded in panoramic views that were more than a reward for the stiff climb. At the little hamlet

of Frant we pulled up at a small wayside inn, in order to give the horses some gruel and breathing time.

This elevated spot commands a truly noble prospect; it is in the centre of a very region of landscape. Before us were wood and water, hill and dale stretching far away, growing from green to grey, and grey to blue as the atmosphere deepened. Here we felt that the air was something more than mere space. It possessed a tangible existence. For once again—once of how many times during even the short commencement of our outing?—how we pitied the poor railway traveller, who loses all these good things; for where the scenery is the finest, nearly always has he to be contented with cuttings and tunnels, for no railway engineer in his senses would take his line over such heights. Why the road builders of old generally did so has often puzzled me, and I can only solve the problem in this wise. Possibly, in the early days of travel, the lower grounds were swampy, less open, and with many streams to ford or bridge; therefore the kind of track that then did duty for a road was more easily constructed and kept passable upon the higher, drier, and less encumbered land. The track was gradually improved; in the course of time it became the regular highway; here and there a steep gradient was lessened, a corner rounded off, but otherwise the later roads (with few exceptions, and these only in degree, such as Telford's mail coach road to Holyhead) kept almost entirely to the line taken by their early predecessors. I can in no other manner account

for so many of our highways being taken up hills and maintaining for miles a high level (like ours that day), when to all appearances a more even route could equally as well have been taken through the valley below. All the same, for the traveller who does not merely wish to go from one place to another, but desires rather to see what the country is like between his starting-point and journey's end, the very fact of these roads traversing high ground is something to be grateful for, affording on this account, as they do, glorious prospects all around, which would be wanting in the valleys.

It is not always easy to discover the why and wherefore of past proceedings, to allot blame or pass praise of what was done in times so wholly different to the present. To show how easily one may in a thoughtless moment form an unjust judgment upon the old builders, I will relate a little incident that occurred in the early days of railways. An engineer was planning a new line through a hilly district, and whilst prospecting for this he remarked to one of his assistants, 'What fools those old engineers were to construct bridges with such large spans to cross streams of water so insignificant; it is a mere waste of good money and materials.' Wise man! It never at the time occurred to him that those excellent bridges he so lightly condemned were not built for the summer alone, but were so designed with ample arches to allow room for the winter floods. It is further recorded of this all too clever engineer that he took care to construct his bridges with smaller arches, and that during the very next winter one

was washed away in consequence, and others more or less damaged.

From Frant our road led us along a glorious rolling country, wooded, hilly, and wild—a land of wide prospects and bracing airs; southward from off the sea these came, fresh and invigorating, yet balmy withal, tempered by their passage over the intervening land. How lighthearted we felt as we drove along! The tonic-laden atmosphere visibly affected our spirits, it quickened our pulse, it was purity itself—sparkling and as exhilarating as champagne.

Sussex is a veritable land of windmills; and very pleasing and characteristic features these are in the landscape, giving life and never-failing interest to the scene. Approaching Mayfield, we entered upon the heart of a windmill country. Hereabouts they seem to abound. One standing boldly out against the sky especially attracted us. Had Don Quixote passed this way, I feel sure that he would not have been able to have resisted the temptation to tilt at it.

Windmills vary greatly in design; this we soon discovered in making sketches of them. The oldest are the most picturesque, but the least profitable commercially; the most beloved of artists, the least admired by their owners. In the most ancient and primitive style, the whole structure of the mill bodily moves on a huge swivel, and is turned by a long lever behind. Of course this necessitates a constant watchfulness on the part of the miller in order to keep the sails facing the wind. Of this kind is the one I have given in my illustration facing page 84. The next advance was to make this lever work upon

a wheel-carriage, which automatically keeps the mill in proper position by means of a circular fan-sail placed upon it. This interesting class is very rare nowadays. In the last most familiar and most improved style, the body of the mill is a stationary structure, and only the top portion moves. So have we traced out the evolution of windmills to their latest perfection.

Taking our camera with us, we mounted the hill and proceeded to take a photograph of the ancient structure—for this was not one 'with all modern improvements'—the miller watching our proceedings, from out of a narrow slit in the building that did duty for a window, with evident interest. A strong breeze was blowing, and the sails were circling round and round, churning the air at a high rate of speed; so we ventured to ask him if he would mind stopping these just for half a minute whilst we took his mill. To our agreeable surprise he nodded a Yes, and presently the sails began to revolve slower and slower, till they stopped altogether. Then we uncapped our lens, and once more the sails commenced circling round and round on their endless task.

We had never been inside a mill, so, packing up our photographic tools, we begged permission to take a glance at the interior, which was readily granted. We found climbing up the long flight of rickety wooden steps almost as difficult as ascending the companion-way of a ship at sea, for the wind shook the old mill, causing the ladder to twist about first one way and then another; and no handrails were provided for the unaccustomed visitor. Entering

A SUSSEX WINDMILL.

ST. GEORGE, HANOVER SQUARE
PUBLIC LIB

the rocking structure, we presently found our sea-legs—or was it our mill-legs ? What a noise, racket, and dust there was inside ! These, with the unpleasant motion, made our visit hardly as agreeable as we anticipated. Noting our looks, the miller remarked : 'She rocks about a good deal to-day. You see there's a high wind on, and she's running hard ; and like a good many of us she's not so young nor strong as she was. But, bless you ! you should just be in her in the winter when it's blowing a regular storm ; she rocks then, I can tell you. Sometimes I don't quite like it myself, and I clears out. You see, she's old ; my grandfather built her when he was a young man, and that's many years gone by ; and the whole mill is supported upon a single centre-beam, so if that should give way the whole concern would blow right over. Such things do happen.' Just then an extra blast struck the ancient mill, the machinery rattled on at an increased speed, and the structure quivered just as a ship does when struck by a sea. Indeed, for the moment we thought of 'clearing out' too. Then the miller said, 'I must put the brake on, or she may run herself a-fire.' Externally these old mills are certainly the most picturesque, and as an artist I delight in them ; but still, I think, were I a miller, I would rather have the less picturesque and more stable modern structure. But the miller was evidently in love with his old mill. 'It served my father and my grandfather well,' he said, 'and it keeps me a-going ; I wouldn't have her altered. Besides, sometimes the tops get blown off the stationary ones. No, she'll last me out, I hopes, though

she does strain a good deal in storms. You see, we are terribly exposed up here; we generally has a breeze more or less on the closest days; it's no good building a mill in a sheltered spot. I often works her on when I see others standing still.' Then he took us round and explained everything, and it was evident that he was very proud of his possession. We were not sorry to get outside again, to stand once more upon *terra firma*, and to escape from all the din and racket. It was a new experience for us, that noisy quarter of an hour in that rickety old mill.

The exterior view of the mill was certainly the most pleasing. We sat down for a while watching its outspread arms, dark and clearly outlined against the white sunlit sky, watching as they turned majestically round and round in mighty sweeps—the very poetry of motion. What is it, I wonder, that is so fascinating, so impressive, about a windmill steadily and slowly at work, as seen sharply silhouetted against the bright white sky—the mighty swirling, the ceaseless circling of those gigantic arms, without steam or any visible power—arms ever rising and falling in a never-completed journey?

The windmill, both by its necessary prominent position and the motion of its sails, powerfully asserts itself. It is astonishing how any movement in the landscape at once attracts the eye and rivets the attention. But in a rural panorama, except perhaps a distant train and the few windmills that have not yet been improved away by steam, there is little of life or movement to be observed. I have often

looked over a vast extent of country from one of the commanding spurs of the South Downs, and seen no sign of movement save the many windmills scattered every here and there. From this vantage-ground I have counted nearly twenty of these at a time, mostly at work; now light in the sunshine, now dark in shade, but always charming features in the prospect, life-giving and eye-delighting. One never wearies of windmills.

Bidding good-bye to the worthy miller, who had been watching us from his mill-door, we once more proceeded on our way, and soon afterwards found ourselves in the quiet little town of Mayfield. Here we drove up to the Star Inn, and indulged our horses in a well-merited rest. An old-fashioned hostel, homely and comfortable, this proved to be: time-toned, in keeping with its surroundings, and with old-fashioned charges too. Not often in these days is one agreeably surprised in this respect; indeed, I should be almost ashamed to mention the small sum that our bill amounted to for our plain but excellently cooked little dinner; and such a simple repast, well cooked and nicely served, is a meal fit for a king. Even the civil maid who waited upon us seemed surprised when, on paying our reckoning, we added a trifle for herself, so unsophisticated and unaccustomed to modern ways was she. On passing by, we caught a glimpse of the old kitchen—a cheerful apartment, and a more liveable one than the best sitting-room into which we were shown. A picturesque interior it was, full of mysterious lights and shadows, the only thing nineteenth century about it being a

patent cooking-range, which seemed strangely out of place where it was, and half lost in the mighty chimney-corner—a little room this almost in itself.

How few Englishmen have discovered rural Sussex; how many Londoners even know of the existence of this ancient and romantic little town of Mayfield, with its traditions of St. Dunstan, its historic palace of the Archbishops of Canterbury (of great renown in former times, and held by them till the reign of the grasping Henry VIII.), its rare old houses full of interest, and the lovely country around? What an indescribable impression the spot gives one of old-world life and slumberous calm; what a sense of antiquity—due these, possibly, to its secluded position, and the fact that, till of late, it has been unblest with a railway. But now at last the inevitable iron road has found it out; and who can tell how much longer it may be preserved from the profane hand of the builder or his equally undesirable companion, the care-for-nothing restorer.

Situated right in the midst of the Sussex hills, overlooking a vast extent of wooded and sparsely populated country, Mayfield gives one the feeling of being a hundred miles from anywhere—a restful feeling wholly foreign to the hurry and bustle of our great cities; it possesses, too, an aroma of antiquity, the very antithesis of the prosperous utilitarianism of our day. It is more of a natural growth than a town simply built, it springs as it were from the soil; it is in perfect pleasing harmony with all around, like Continental provincial towns, and, unlike most English ones, it lends an added charm to the scene. Abroad,

as a rule, the cities interest me more than the landscape; especially is this the case in France. In England the reverse holds good: our cities, with a few, very few, honourable exceptions, are rather blots than pleasing features in the prospect. How old England differed from modern England in this respect Mayfield is a proof.

Strange that prosperity should in these days—by railways, manufactories, steam-mills, costly piles of bricks and mortar, factory-like hotels, gigantic stations, and so forth—have given birth to so much ugliness, and that in times past it should have produced things mainly picturesque: witness the old cathedrals, abbeys, churches (the combined result of piety and prosperity), the grand old Tudor mansions, the stately half-timbered houses, the many moated granges, and even the ancient hostelries—beautiful all. The bloom of age has doubtless lent an additional charm to these; yet even when new, by the pleasing variety of changeful outline, high gables, turrets, towers, clustering chimneys, hospitable porches, projecting bays, and last, though not least, their sound, solid construction, which delights the eye unconsciously, they possessed a power of pleasing that modern architects never (or very rarely) seem to attain, in spite of all their striving for effect. One reason of all this is, we ornament and beautify our buildings with papers, pictures, furniture, forgetting the artistic and lasting charms of honest construction boldly expressed. This it is that charms us so in a Gothic cathedral or humble village fane; the built beauty of form, a lasting part and parcel

of the structure, not to be changed with varying fashion.

Rambling out into the town, sketch-book in hand, in order to secure some of its picturesque architectural 'bits,' whilst we were engaged drawing an old gable, two ladies passed us clad in some religious dress. Guessing that they belonged to the palace (the ancient ruins of this were purchased by the Duchess of Leeds some years ago, partially restored, made habitable, and presented with a gift of land to the Roman Catholic Church for a sisterhood), we politely asked them if it would be possible to see over the old pile. They as politely replied that if we would go to the great gateway and ring the bell, they thought that we might be permitted to view a portion of it.

So, finishing first our work, we did as directed. In answer to our summons, the massive door was opened, and the attendant said she would go and ask the mother—nothing was ever done without her permission. It struck us that she appeared greatly in awe of the 'mother.' So the guardian of the gateway disappeared, leaving us safely and expectantly standing outside. Presently she returned, accompanied by one of the ladies whom we had accosted. This was none other than the 'mother,' who greeted us with a smile and kindly offered to conduct us over the building herself; so we congratulated ourselves upon our good fortune. Our self-appointed guide was severe-looking, but pleasant-spoken; we preferred her voice to her appearance—the one chilled, the other charmed us. Strange, this contrast in one person!

Perhaps here I may be allowed to make a short digression, and give in brief a history of the palace, which we found carefully written out, framed, and hung in the sitting-room of our inn. As this had been deemed worthy of framing, we thought it worthy of copying. This, then, is what we transcribed:—

MAYFIELD PALACE.

One of the villas of the Archbishops of Canterbury for the purpose of keeping hospitality in the more remote portions of their Diocese. Eadermas, in the life of St. Dunstan (who died in the year 988), seems to imply this palace was built by this prelate, although he does not positively express it: he also says that here he erected a wooden church, as he had done at his other Hospitary places. The life of this saint, as related by Osbertus, Eadermas, and other monkish writers, is filled with revelations of stupendous miracles wrought by him, as well as a number of bickerings and conflicts with the Devil, in all of which Satan met with more than his match. . . . Amongst these, at the dedication of the church at Mayfield, St. Dunstan, performing the ceremony in person, and according to the accustomed form going in procession round the building, observed it was out of the line of Sanctity—that is, it did not stand due east and west—wherefore, touching it with his shoulder, he moved it to its proper bearings, to the great amazement and edification of all beholders.

To which I may add that, after Henry VIII., the next notable possessor of Mayfield Palace was Sir Thomas Gresham, the famous London merchant who built the Exchange. Here in 1573 he entertained his royal mistress, Queen Elizabeth, during one of her progresses. After passing through other hands, it was allowed to fall into ruin, in which state it was purchased by the Duchess of Leeds, as before stated. So, after many strange mutations of fortune,

from a stately palace to a farmhouse, from this to ruins, within whose roofless halls oxen and swine prowled, and upon which the owl and bat made their home, now once more (lovingly restored by Pugin, and well) it shelters the worshippers of the old religion.

But my pen is running away with me. I must not forget, when I started this digression, that we were under the charge of the worthy mother of the establishment, who had kindly offered to conduct us over the building. First she led us into the great hall, now converted into a chapel for the sisterhood. This we learnt was sixty-eight feet long, thirty-eight feet broad, and fifty feet high—a noble apartment; the three (restored) lofty stone arches supporting the roof are both beautiful and uncommon in design, and deserve particular attention. Though the modern is here most happily combined with the past, thanks to the knowledge and the manner in which Mr. Pugin entered into the spirit of the mediæval builders, still we felt that we must except the stained glass windows as being out of keeping with the mellow tone of all else; these struck us as being both too bright and crude in colour, not rich and glowing as they should be. There is all the difference between rich and gaudy tints: these windows attract the eye, whether it will or no, the least worthy of being noticed yet the most observable.

Next we were shown the venerable relics of which the sisterhood are so proud—the genuine identical anvil and tongs of St. Dunstan. Yes, there before us was the veritable anvil upon which the renowned

saint was at work when his Satanic majesty appeared to him; the authentic pincers in which he caught hold of the Devil's nose (what a pity he ever let it go again!), and was there not the very notch in them caused by the nasal appendage of the enemy of mankind?—which, by the way, must have been harder than iron. How, then, with this positive proof before us, could we doubt the genuineness of these treasured relics, even had we been hard-hearted enough to grieve the good mother with a suggestion of worldly doubt? Even a superstitious, childish faith seems to me better than the believe-nothing unfaith of this our day. 'Of course,' said the worthy mother to us, 'we do not expect *you* as Protestants to believe in these, if you do not wish;' to which we replied, 'How could we be sceptical, with the very marks of the struggle still plainly visible?' at which remark she appeared pleased; which was well, for, whilst satisfying her, we did not in any way commit ourselves.

Then we were conducted outside to see St. Dunstan's well. But here romance had given way to the practical. It was covered over and fitted with a hot-air engine—this in order to pump up the water required for the establishment. But we bore our disappointment without a sign; for had we not already seen the precious relics, the actual possessions of the honoured saint? Nor in such company did we even dare to hint that certain wicked, worldly wise, hard-headed, and fact-proof antiquaries have maintained that these very tongs and anvil certainly do not belong to an earlier date than the sixteenth century.

And so, thanking her for her kindness, we bade the mother good-bye.

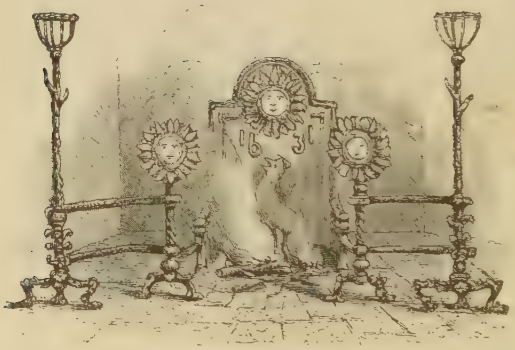
The Devil, it may be remembered, after his encounter with St. Dunstan, went and dipped his wounded nose into some water at Tunbridge Wells to cool it, and this accounts, according to tradition, for the evil smell and chalybeate taste of those waters, which till that event were free from any flavour of iron.

There are two old houses that are especially noteworthy in Mayfield: one in the middle of the town—this is a most picturesque and perfect specimen of an ancient half-timbered mansion—the other in the outskirts, of stone and of a somewhat later date. Oh, the charm of these old homes! What an individuality they possess; what a feeling of domestic abiding they give, of restful quietude—a happy combination of stateliness and homeliness! How free they are from formal monotony or showy ostentation, yet equally exempt from studied quaintness or meaningless struck-on ornamentation! They have, moreover, the rare merit of simple dignity: whether large or small, whether grand or humble, they are equally fit dwellings for the wealthy noble or impoverished gentleman. Picturesqueness is their birthright; but this has come naturally, it is evidently not intended, as is so frequently and assertively the case in modern residences and villas. Doubtless, to a severe classical critic, they are far from being architecturally perfect; purposeful symmetry is no part of their plan; their very shortcomings in this respect constitute their special charm—they are so

delightfully irregular. Their exteriors are manifestly the outcome of the whims and wishes of their former owners; as to internal accommodation, altered and added to, it may be, by their successors for the same reasons; thus each generation has helped to make their history. In them a window is put where a window is wanted, a chimney is raised where required, a gable is placed where necessary, the porch where most convenient—these for utility, not uniformity. And, above all, they impress you with a feeling that the builder has been thoroughly honest in his construction, that he has endeavoured to make everything as good as possible for the money expended. In fine weather, mansion or cottage, these old buildings are comfortable, cosy, and homelike, when kept in good order and repair, of course—the very *beaux idéals* of Englishmen's dwellings are they. Looking upon such old homes, we could quite enter into the spirit of a certain well-known Englishman who is credited with having remarked to a citizen of new America that he 'thought he could not live comfortably in a country where there were no Elizabethan houses.'

Upon the first half-timbered structure we noticed the date 1573 plainly marked. Now this matter of date revealed to us a curious coincidence. Wishing to gather all the particulars we could concerning this interesting mansion, upon our return home we looked up several guide-books, and to our astonishment found that, when they did mention a date at all, they gave it each wrongly, as 1576. Why, I wonder, this

strange agreement as to an erroneous date? Do guide-book compilers glean their information one from the other?—or how else can be explained this (and others I know of) suspicious concurrence amongst them, contrary to facts?



Old Sussex Iron Work

An Old Mill

CHAPTER VI.

Mayfield Church—The Sussex Iron Age—Relics of the Olden Days—Iron Tomb Slabs—Lost, not Forgotten—Good Advice—Fourteen Miles of Beauty—Rural Cottages—A Picturesque Interior—A Painter's, Poet's, and Philosopher's Opinion of English Scenery—Hailsham—Hotel Bills in the Country—A Visitors' Book—A Wonderful Discovery—Michelham Priory—An old Monastic Mill—Painstaking Builders—Why was Michelham Priory fortified?

After our inspection of the ancient historic palace of Mayfield, we wended our way towards its old church. This was interesting to us chiefly for the relics it possesses of the far-away time when Sussex was a busy iron manufacturing county, and of which Mayfield was one of the principal centres. Indeed, the country around still abounds with iron ore, but the coal in the North and the growing scarcity of wood fuel in the South extinguished this industry long years ago. Still, as iron ore undoubtedly exists here, who knows what the whirligig of time may do? —even this purely agricultural county, this sunny Sussex, with its fresh airs and pure blue skies, may once again be scarred with practical money-making

mines and heaps of refuse, its bright pure atmosphere be smoke and sulphur laden, its sparkling streams defiled, and all its beauty gone. Alas! we have to pay a high price for commercial prosperity.

Mayfield—smokeless, quiet Mayfield—was indeed at one time the Wolverhampton of England; near to, at Buxted, was turned out the first cast cannon ever produced in England. Here and there, every now and again during our journey, we discovered in various old homes examples of this Sussex iron manufacture, such as ancient firebacks, andirons, ornamented keys, iron chests, and such like, many of which had the names of their founders and dates thereon; for these old craftsmen were evidently proud of their work. A pity it is, that so much of it should have found its way to the hands of London dealers; luckily, beautiful scenery is not to be bought and sold, and so lost to England for ever, for we were told by a dealer that most of these things eventually find their way to America. Still, in spite of the money temptations held out by the crafty and well-supplied emissaries of Wardour Street, the Sussex people have been slow to part with their heirlooms, and in many an out-of-the-way parish excellent specimens of the departed iron age are yet to be found by the diligent searcher. These principally consist of firebacks and irons, candlesticks, holders for rush-lights, and, to a less degree, of andirons. In one or two parts of sequestered Sussex these may be almost said to abound; but I fear to hint the precise localities, lest they should come thus indirectly to the all-absorbing dealers' knowledge—men whose

only care for or interest in art is the profit they can make out of it, with a few honourable exceptions.

But to return to Mayfield church. In the nave of this, on the floor, are two iron memorial slabs, of native manufacture, doing duty for brasses, and apparently for this purpose quite as enduring as such, though not so pleasing in effect, being dark and sombre in colour. These were the first of the kind we had ever seen, and we have no recollection of having anywhere come across similar memorials. The two in question are to the memory of members of the Sands family, whoever they might have been. The first and earliest is a somewhat crude affair, the lettering is clumsily done, and rude, and in the casting the figure 7 in 72 is reversed, and this gives the whole inscription an awkward appearance. This runs as follows :—

HEAR — LYETH
The Body of
THOMAS SANDS
Who Was
BVRYED IULY
The 20 1668
AGED ⅂2
YEARS

—a short inscription long spun out. The next slab below, however, shows a marked improvement in the art of casting ; indeed, it could hardly be better done. Also, it would seem to show that the family of Sands had meanwhile flourished mightily, for, in place of a few simple lines, we have, besides the lettering, a most wonderful and elaborate coat of arms. This consists of a large shield containing some

device or devices, of which we could not make much (but that might very possibly be due to our sad want of knowledge of heraldry); this shield is ornamented above by scrolls, and supported (I believe that is the correct term) by two spotted horses, or what we took to be such, the inevitable helmet above being surmounted by a nondescript bird for a crest. To complete all properly, there is the motto, 'Love as Brethren' The above-said bird, as far as I am aware, is quite unknown to nature or even heraldry; which, by the way, deals in some curious creatures, impossible in this world and undesirable in any other.

Wandering into the churchyard, we had a good view of our old friend the ancient windmill, standing boldly out upon the hilltop, still busily at work. A sight we observed here touched a chord of sympathy within us; upon two lowly graves, not grass-grown like the rest, and therefore recent, were placed two common jampots, filled with wayside flowers, evidently put there by loving hands. Only a few poor wildflowers in the commonest of earthen jars! Yet freshly gathered these, and arranged with tender care; perchance it was the best the poor folk could do—they could not afford to buy garden ones. Not a showy offering to the dead, truly; yet somehow that very little—perhaps because it was so little—spoke plainly to us of sorrowing hearts, of a loving, living remembrance of dear ones lost; and I thought I would rather have those sweet familiar flowers gathered and placed thus by sorrowing hands above my tomb, than all the costly wreaths of hothouse

birth, merely purchased. Gifts and offerings that can be bought by the wealthy without feeling the cost may or may not be tributes of affection, but these humble posies of wildflowers (not bouquets) took time and trouble to gather and arrange so tastily—there could be no mistake as to the motive of the givers.

Turning away from these, we saw another sight, the very reverse of this thoughtful and pleasing remembrance of the dead. In an out-of-the-way corner of the churchyard were collected together in crowded confusion what appeared to us to be a portion or a whole of the parts that once formed a monumental tomb of some importance. The carvings upon the separate pieces, as far as we could judge, were still sharp and good. Here the dead seemed utterly forgotten, even their memorial knew its place no more; no longer it marked the spot of the underlying dead, it had vanished from its appointed place before its time. But enough. In truth these old churchyards, with their colonies of long-forgotten dead, their grass-grown unnoted graves, their moss-encrusted, half-obliterated monuments, their solemn gloomy yews, are mournful wandering. Doubly mournful they seem when all around is so bright and fair, so full of sweetness, so charged with rejoicing life and summer sunshine, from the blue arching sky above to the soft green world below.

Returning to our inn, well content with our wanderings, and the unexpected wealth of interest that had, as the Americans say, 'been sprung upon us' in this little out-of-the-world town, we took

another glance around the place. Finding our way into the taproom, we noticed hung up the following

GOOD ADVICE:

Call frequently
Drink moderately
Pay honourably
Be good company
Part friendly
and
Go home quietly.

The fireplace here we noticed also was decorated by two long churchwarden pipes and ale glasses 'proper' carved in low relief upon the stone mantel. A commonplace, still a suitable adornment, possessing at any rate the quality of being in keeping with its surroundings.

I do not know anywhere—no, not even in all fair England—a more beautiful road than the little-traversed one that leads from Mayfield to Hailsham, right through the heart of Sussex. Truly we saw it under the most favourable auspices; the day was simply perfect, and I hold that a perfect day in England is a thing that cannot be equalled or approached anywhere in the world. The landscape was bathed in a soft golden sunshine, the tender blue above was flecked with careless drifting clouds, causing ever-changing lights and shadows to chase each other in endless succession over the far-extending prospect, till they lost themselves in the dim dreamy distance. A balmy southern air, too, was blowing a delicious soft south-west breeze, wild and warm, balmy yet bracing, the kindliest and pleasantest

IN THE HEART OF SUSSEX.

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breeze there is. Even upon such a day a London street might have appeared almost beautiful; but after all the bright inspiriting day did not make the scenery, it merely lent an added charm to it.

However, the country we passed through seemed to us surpassingly lovely, a combination in itself of all sorts of pleasantness and good things, small as well as great, from the little daisy that dotted the fresh green meadows to the mighty swelling distant downs. A country it was of hills and woods, of sheltered valleys and windmill-crowned heights, of cultivated lands and wild wastes charmingly contrasting. A country abounding as well in human associations, a country of old homes and picturesque manor-houses, many of these in former times having been the residences of thriving ironmasters, which fact may account for their number and importance; now they are mostly converted into farmsteads, less ambitious, but not less eye-pleasing than when in the full prosperity of their former estate. Possibly even more delightful to look upon with their additional outlying barns, oast-houses, rambling sheds and cattle shelters, their deeply strawed yards, and the general gathering of odds-and-ends—ricks, waggons, carts, ploughs, harrows, wheelbarrows, and the like, grouped about in delightful disorder, giving charming effects of light and shade, of form and colour. Now and again we caught a glimpse of a stately mansion, and by the side of our way we passed many a cosy cottage, with gardens of homely flowers, comfortable-looking cottages and picturesque, and more than once we observed one that would almost come up to a poet's

ideal of what such English homes should be. Cottages, whose gardens were colourful, sweet scented and gay with roses, carnations, stocks, passion-flowers, sun-flowers, hollyhocks, and I know not what else. These gardens were cheerful spots of bright colour in the green landscape. Cottages whose walls were smothered in honeysuckle and various creepers, whose red-tiled roofs were golden with lichen, green with mosses, and yellow with stonecrop, and whose whole appearance betokened homely contentment.

As an excuse to get a glance into the living room of one of these, we descended from the phaeton, knocked at the door, and asked if we 'were right for Hailsham.' Nor were we disappointed with the picture that was presented to us; and this is what we saw: A low-ceilinged apartment, small but cosy, a browned beamed ceiling aged and bent, but strong notwithstanding, an ample open fireplace, with a wood fire upon the hearth, kept in its place by two dog-irons and a little circular fender. Suspended over the fire was an old-fashioned kettle—a primitive but picturesque arrangement. The floor was of red bricks, clean and warm in colour, and a bit of carpeting under the table gave an air of comfort to the room. The window—a long leaden lattice one—was filled with gay scarlet geraniums; and sundry bright tin and ruddy glowing copper utensils upon the mantelshelf made quite a cheerful show. I know of many a grand London drawing-room less liveable to my home-loving self than that homely Sussex cottage interior. The very charm of these

rural abodes is, to me, that they are not too picturesque to be real. But I am not of an ambitious temperament; perchance the very unostentatious homeliness of such, to the majority of people in this luxurious age, would even be depressing. Still, for me, if I were poor, to live in such a cosy cottage would rob poverty of half its terrors. Even a millionaire in his sumptuous palace cannot be more than happy and content—if he can be that.

How loveable and winsome is this mellow homelike English scenery of ours! How long it takes to tire of it! Indeed, its resources are so boundless, its aspects so changeful, its interests so varied, that, though I have wandered about rural England now for many years, it seems to me ever fresh; such scenery could never weary the lover of the beautiful. Speaking of it, does not Cowper truly say—

> Scenes must be beautiful which, daily viewed,
> Please daily, and whose novelty survives
> Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years:
> Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Now let us see what a famous painter thinks of it—one who, if anybody, should be qualified to speak, for he had painted it lovingly for long years. 'I am doomed,' wrote Constable, 'never to see the living scenes that inspired the landscape of Wilson and Claude. No, but I was born to paint a happier land, my own dear England; and when I cease to love her, may I, as Wordsworth says, never more hear

> Her green leaves rustle, or her torrents roar.'

And now, by way of change, let us listen to what

a stranger says of England. Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the American millionaire (who crossed the Atlantic for the special purpose), made a coaching excursion along the old highways right through Britain, driving from Brighton to Inverness. Upon arriving at the latter town he telegraphed: 'We arrived at the end of Paradise this evening at six o'clock.' And still again Professor Goldwin Smith, after an absence of four or five years in 'a newly settled land of promise,' thus writes: 'I do not know whether rural England grows more beautiful, or whether it is that one is more struck with its beauty every time one returns to it from a land which by the absence of finish shows that no labour has yet been spared for anything but the absolutely useful.' No, professor, it is not that England grows more beautiful; it is the sharp contrast with the unpicturesque thriftiness, the matter-of-fact money-making utilitarianism of new lands, that emphasises its rare charms. Many countries can boast of finer scenery, some may be more romantic; but for quiet loveliness England excels them all.

I have driven now some thousands of miles over English ground—I do not think that there is a single shire but that I have traversed, at any rate, some portion of it—and withal I feel how much I have still left to see, more than will last me my life; and yet, thinking over my many wanderings, I cannot bring to mind any fourteen miles of country more full of changeful beauty than those pleasant never-to-be-forgotten ones between historic Mayfield and sleepy little Hailsham.

A quiet town is Hailsham, somewhat of the somnolent order, certainly in no way picturesque nor yet exactly ugly—a clean-kept, neat, unenterprising place. We found an unpretending inn here which, if not luxurious, possessed the better qualifications of quietness, cleanliness, and real comfort, and, moreover—a very excellent moreover—our food was well cooked; the traveller must be hard to please who would desire more. Both landlord and landlady were models of civility, and so was the waitress; and our bill was a pattern one for moderation. Indeed, driving about England, in the rural country towns, and generally when in spots that have not been invaded by the professional excursionist, we have found the charges of the innkeepers to be the reverse of extortionate. Oftentimes, in truth, have we felt almost ashamed at the small amount of payment that was asked of us for all that we had received. I have never felt this qualm of conscience, however, when settling my bill at a modern fashionable or tourist-beloved hotel.

During the evening, whilst looking around our room, we chanced to alight upon a visitors' book, of all things in the world, at this unsophisticated hostel. Needless to say, it was no grandly bound volume, only a common manuscript book, in which weather-delayed and other travellers had amused themselves in making remarks, wise, witty, or dull. These books often prove interesting reading, for amongst the chaff they abound in generally some grains of corn may be winnowed by diligent perusal. Indeed, I make it a point of never missing an

opportunity of examining those I from time to time come across; thus have I gleaned quite a collection of good things from out the mass of commonplace remarks, and have by doing so managed to compile a readable little notebook full of the most varied items. More interesting to me this unpretending collection of odds and ends than many showy printed books I know of.

Now and again a stray artist, or a chance wanderer, a wielder of the 'grey goose quill,' finds his way to these remote country inns, and when they possess such a visitors' book often enliven its pages with something worthy of a better and more permanent place. In a certain solitary hostel somewhere in the wilds of North Wales is, or was, preserved a book in which the late Charles Kingsley, Tom Taylor, and other well-known literary men had written some original and excellent verses. I say 'or was,' for sometimes, alas! wealthy collectors of such things have persuaded landlords to part with their treasures, or, even worse, we have actually known a case where, all other means failing, sundry pages have been deliberately cut out and stolen. I know also of a very humble little inn, right away in the heart of the mountains (this as well in Wales), which we came across during one of our wanderings, and most unexpectedly and to our delightful surprise discovered in its tiny sitting-room a portly album filled with charming pen-and-ink sketches and water-colour drawings. The landlady explained, in reply to our look of astonishment, that they had been done by artists who had come there to paint

the grand scenery around, and who, to relieve the tedium of wet days, had presented her with this book and helped to fill it; and as in that part of the world wet days were by no means of rare occurrence, her album had flourished, though the artists suffered thereby. Amongst the number of contributors we recognised the work of Herkomer with other painters, some famous and some with their names yet to make. The landlady (who was not overburdened with this world's goods) told us that she had been offered 10*l.* for the book and refused it—alas! for human nature, not because she appreciated it, but because some one had told her it was worth much more!

Doctors, we have observed, sometimes, though rarely, contribute to these books; twice only I think have we come across their views thus given. These generally relate to the nature of the climate, or call attention to some local spring that has failed to become famous, giving their opinions upon it, and the benefits such is likely to confer upon mankind if it would but give its health-restoring but unknown qualities a test. One is, however, apt to fall into strange mistakes in hunting up new spas. Once a certain doctor made a marvellous discovery. In a part of the country where mineral springs are non-existent, this said doctor came upon a little stream of which he wrote, 'he found by tasting it that it was decidedly chalybeate'; and then further went on to enlarge upon the subject, ending his remarks by stating that 'he intended to take a bottle of the water home with him to have it

analysed.' The landlord of the inn—a man of humour, with a soul above mineral springs—drily remarked to us, 'I rather think the doctor made some slight mistake, for I have known the stream ever since I was a boy, and never thought anything of it; but the doctor was such a mighty clever fellow that I said nothing to him, but let him have his own way. You see, sir,' he continued with a merry twinkle in his eye, which caused us to think some astonishing revelation was coming—'you see, sir, if he would but have listened to me, I could have told him as how that stream was used for washing sheep in just above the spot where he made his wonderful discovery, and I shrewdly guess it was the "dip" they use for the sheep that he tasted. But, Lor' bless you, sir! some folks is so clever: just as I was about a-remarking to him that I thought he had made a mistake, he looks at me severely, and asks me what I know about mineral waters. So I said nothing more. Then he said to me, it would be the fortune of my hotel. "Well, I don't know much about that," I replied, "the only mineral water I understands is sodawater."' And then the jolly-looking landlord indulged in a hearty laugh, in which we joined, for the merry manner in which he related the amusing incident was irresistible.

But I have been sadly digressing. To return to the unpretending visitors' book that we found at our little inn at Hailsham. By this we learnt that a number of people had found it so comfortable that they had made a prolonged stay there, making it their headquarters from which to explore the sur-

rounding country; and, besides, there were several others who had rested there for the night whilst 'on a driving tour' like ourselves. Curiously enough, about two-thirds of the visitors who entered their names added this information as to their method of travelling. We had no idea before, though enthusiastic in the matter ourselves, that so many other people indulged in this most pleasant of all methods of spending a holiday. For, strange to say—very strange, indeed, it seemed to us—but only some half a dozen times, during the whole of our wanderings over the greater portion of Britain, had we actually met any one taking 'a cruise on wheels' in like manner to ourselves.

Amongst the list of names of various people we observed that of a well-known M.P., and a certain famous architect, who doubtless—wise man—had been 'doing' the country round about, gathering hints from the many fine old buildings with which it abounds. Were I an architect, I should delight in studying the charming relics of the past-time builders that more than elsewhere seem so especially to have remained unspoilt and unimproved in pleasant old-world Sussex. Indeed, such a comfortable hostel would make excellent quarters for any one fond of exploring a beautiful but little-known land (in goodly portions, at any rate), and who would delight in making discoveries for himself, and thus enjoy a novel holiday at small cost and great gain both in health and pleasure.

The only other work that we could obtain any entertainment from was an old guide-book. And at

the best this was not over-interesting reading, for the writer, like the majority of his class, had the unfortunate knack of enlarging upon items that everybody at all familiar with their own country must be cognisant of, and passing by in a few lines, when he made mention of them at all, those out-of-the-way spots, the most interesting above all others, because so little known or written about. Such works tell us what we already know, or of those things we can readily obtain information upon for ourselves, but seldom or never hint at the many unheeded spots of interest that should come within their scope. And it is just these little known and unfrequented places that are often the most beautiful and rewarding from the very fact that they have not become show places and spoilt; and, besides which, they possess the charming qualification of freshness. Not being written about, we come upon them unawares; we have not been duly prepared for all we see. Thus the traveller has the pleasing novelty of being a self-discoverer—a sort of mild nineteenth-century Columbus, cruising through unknown Britain! And in truth the odd nooks and corners of England are well worth exploring; for curious old-world villages, legend-abounding manor-houses, ghostly half-deserted halls dating from the time of good Queen Bess, quaint and ancient hostelries—great rambling picturesque structures relics of the coaching age—strange folk, and other reminders of the past, may still be discovered by the wanderer by road, if he will only explore the by-lanes of the land far from the conventional railway routes, and away as well from the main highways.

I have said the guide-book we glanced at afforded us but little information ; and certainly its matter-of-fact way of cataloguing Nature's beauties and historic spots did not encourage us to make a lengthy perusal of it. One thing, however, we learnt from its pages, and for this we were grateful —namely, that a few miles from Horsham were the ruins of Michelham Priory ; 'but,' added our trusty guide, 'they will scarcely repay a visit.' But we were not to be daunted by this discouraging remark ; perhaps even (most probably, indeed, we thought to ourselves) the compiler of this work has not as much as seen the spot he professes to describe. At any rate, we gleaned from his meagre comments that some portions of the old priory were still existing, notably a gateway tower ; also that there was a wide moat enclosing upwards of eight acres once covered with the conventual buildings ; and moreover that the priory mill was still standing, and even yet in use.

Surely, we said to ourselves, it is marvellously strange, considering all this, if Michelham Priory, or what remains of it, will not repay a visit ! Enough for us to know that such a place existed ; and we forthwith determined to proceed there and judge of it for ourselves. So our maps were unpacked and scanned, the road thereto traced, and next morning early saw us on our way thither.

A pleasant road it proved, narrow and winding —all the better for that. For the first mile or so it led us through a thick wood (the Abbot's Wood our map made it), then on to a wild wide common, the

extensive prospects from which were a relief from the tree-bound portion of our way—our eyes rejoiced once more to view a distant horizon.

Arriving at the common, we glanced over the far-stretching and wooded country that lay before us, searching for some trace of the ruins; and there, sure enough, away to the right, half drowned in deep green foliage, peeped forth the grey old tower and weathered walls of the once prosperous priory—a sight that made us hasten along, for even from a distance we instinctively felt that we had that day come across a spot we should long afterwards remember with delight.

A half-mile or so of a rural lane, a sudden turn in the road, and a few hundred yards farther we came suddenly upon the old mill backed by dark green trees; beyond this was the great gateway with the wide moat alongside, crossed by a massive one-arched bridge; mill, trees, and gateway tower forming altogether as charming and complete a picture as the most exacting artist could desire—a picture that was worth a journey of itself to see.

Dismounting here, we crossed the substantial successor of the old drawbridge and entered upon the moat-enclosed ground. Truly not much besides the gateway and tower is left of the once extensive pile; what else there is has been converted into a farmhouse—a descent from the poetical to the practical, yet picturesque withal, a happy but somewhat rare result of such change of uses.

We saw no one about, so we invited ourselves into the gardens and grounds, and inspected the

building externally. But what little of the original structure is left has been of necessity so altered and changed to adapt it for its present purpose, that we found our smattering of archæological knowledge wholly insufficient even to afford us any idea as to what the old building was like when in the time of its full glory.

Close alongside the kitchen door we came across some fine early English arches, built up; these possess richly decorated capitals, and we came to the conclusion that they must have formed part of the chapel. The stonework around these arches, though having been exposed to the storms and frosts of many long years, still plainly show the marks of the very chisel strokes of the ancient masons, sharply defined even now; which fact proved to us at least one thing, that the builders of old were as careful of small things as of great; they were as regardful of the material they employed as of the manner in which they employed it, otherwise these stones in question would not have braved the elements for so long, with so little hurt.

The house is surrounded by gardens and orchards, and everywhere the deep wide moat forbids egress or access save by the gate-tower. This tower alone is well preserved and in good condition, it is an excellent specimen of honest careful masonry; the joints appear as perfect as when first made; the recessed square to receive the drawbridge when upraised is still there. The stone structure that has taken the place of this bridge, though in its way sound and solid enough, and though this, too, has grown grey with years, still

plainly reveals inferior workmanship. Still, if this serves its purpose, some may say, what more can you require? True; but it is not built as well as it could be. A speculative builder's house built to last the lease out may serve its purpose; but for all that, as unfortunate dwellers therein know to their cost, the work might be better done. Even putting comfort and health on one side, the substantial lasting appearance of honest construction is of itself most pleasing.

One thing struck us about the place: though a large farmstead, and having the usual supply of fowls, ducks, geese, horses, and cattle around, a strange tranquillity prevailed. Farmhouses generally have more or less of life about them, are seldom noiseless like this one was that day; it seemed as though the spirit of the past incumbent brooded over all, preserving as by some spell the profound peace of its past holy quiet, as though nothing could disturb the calm serenity of the once hallowed spot.

I am not writing a guide-book, and therefore those who would know more of the early history of this interesting pile must consult some other work. I will merely remark that the extensive moat is now as perfect and as practicable for the purpose of defence as ever it was; besides its width and depth, the fact that it encloses some eight acres will give a good idea of its former importance.

But why, the question may be asked, did such a building need the protection of a moat at all?—a priory is not a fortress. Truly; but it must be borne in mind that this one was near to the sea. Possibly the building was thus protected to enable

the monks to resist a sudden attack by foreign marauders rather than intended to endure a regular siege; also as well, it may be, as a security against the bands of robbers that once infested this part of the country.

An Old-time Home

Michelham Priory Moat

CHAPTER VII.

The Monkish Builders — Mediæval Workmanship — Situations of Monasteries—A Chat with a Fisherman—The Grandeur of the Downs—Winding Roads—Wilmington—Curious old Church—A Relic of the Druids—Ruins of Wilmington Priory—The Mysterious Wilmington Giant—The Smallest Church in England—A Lilliputian River—Alfriston—A very old Village—A Market-cross—An Ancient Pilgrim's Hostelrie—A Grand Bit of Building—Curious Carvings—The Inns of Old.

NEEDLESS to say that Michelham Priory is set in the midst of a pleasant country. The old monks were no bad judges of scenery; trust them to make no mistake in such a matter. They always selected the choicest spots in the land in which to raise their religious edifices. Here there are waving many tinted woods around, a river of course lends a sparkle of life to the landscape—the Cuckmere to wit: is the name familiar to you, kind reader, who know your own land so well?—useful, besides being ornamental this, as providing the worthy monks with their Friday's fish, when they fasted, luxuriously—so at least their enemies declare—but there were monks

and monks; and bounding all the goodly prospect are the swelling downs, ever varying as the hours change—a soft silvery grey in the early morning, green at noon, till lost in the distant blue, and a deep solemn purple gloom at evensong as seen against the sunset sky.

A remote corner this in which to dream and forget awhile the cares of the world. A pleasant spot, with its restful quietude that has never been disturbed by the sound of the railway whistle and its associations of a hallowed past.

Verily those old monks had an eye for the beauties of Nature, as well as a true love for art. For always amongst the finest scenery it was that they raised those miracles in stones, those poems of architecture whose very ruins yet plainly proclaim the grandeur of their conceptions, the greatness of their genius, the mightiness of the living faith of the days gone by.

We may admire their works, marvel at them, but we cannot do the like; for our craftsmen possess neither the spirit nor the deeply rooted religious belief of those of old necessary to reproduce them. We may imitate these mediæval edifices, and we do; but our productions are comparatively feelingless and lifeless; and how can it be otherwise, for have we not for the last century or more been industriously converting our workmen into mere soulless machines? They are no longer artists taking a delight in their work for the work's sake. Look upon the fanciful conceits of the old monks, their sculptured faces, be they of saint or devil: what life and expression they put into the meaningless stone! You can quite see that they

believed in what they represented, and that they enjoyed their task ; it is distinctly living, not, as ours, mechanical. By the way, I have often wondered how it was that such men should so have delighted to produce grinning demons and wicked devils instead of good and honoured saints, which one would have imagined their minds would have more inclined to ? Perhaps it was they felt they had more freedom in dealing with such creatures than with placid angels ; their fancy revelled in the grotesque, and here they could give their imaginings full play, and a little licence likewise as to quaintness of form. But whatever he did, the mediæval craftsman did his very best ; he put his whole soul into his work. As Emerson finely says :

> The hand that rounded Peter's dome
> And groined the aisles of Christian Rome
> Wrought in a sad sincerity :
> Himself from God he could not free,
> He builded better than he knew,
> The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Speaking of the situations of the old monasteries, Father Gonzague truly remarks that they all stood in spots 'pleasing to the eye—in a valley by a running stream, or upon a jutting hill overhanging the river bank—like St. Agatha's and Eggleston in Yorkshire ; others close on the seashore, within hearing of the perpetual cadence of the waves, like Torre, the wealthiest of the English houses in Devonshire, on a spot the charm of which is not easily surpassed, backed by hills and uplands, with just room enough on the plain for the noble church, the monastery, and its outbuildings, its gardens, its fishponds, and

its mill ; or, again, among the deep and narrow dales of Derbyshire, or amid the gentle swell of the Kentish hills ; in the forest land of Nottinghamshire, like Welbeck ; or else in remote and wild retreats, speaking of penance and detachment, like the Abbey of Magdalen's Vale at Shap, in Westmoreland.'

As we were taking a last look round, in a remote wood-shaded corner beside the moat we espied a fisherman, the first human being we had seen about the spot ; and, half for the sake of company and half to hear what he might have to say, we made our way to him and inquired what sport he was having. 'Well,' he replied contentedly, 'I've only been a couple of hours as yet, and have caught nothing, unless it is a cold ; but '—this quite cheerily—'I've had a nibble or two, so I'm not going to grumble. I'm a sportsman, not a mere catcher of fishes, and I don't so much mind whether I catch anything or not, for when I do I never know what to do with what I get. My angling is more of an excuse for an outing than anything else. So, whether I return home with a full or an empty creel, I'm equally satisfied. I've accomplished my object—a day in the open air.' Philosophical man! 'Are there any fish to be caught?' 'I should rather think there were—big 'uns, too. Why, this old moat swarms with jack—pike, some people calls 'em. I've known 'em to bite right through my tackle, and get away with bait and all. They are big fellows, I can tell you, and knowing ones, too. I expects they are the descendants of those the monks used to breed in the "stews." No, if I don't catch any, it's not for the want of 'em, it's

because they are too knowing for me.' This was the very first time that we had ever known an angler to acknowledge that when he could not fill his creel it was his own fault, and not that there really were no fish to be caught, or that the water was too clear for any sport, or that the fish were shy, as the stream had been whipped so often as to frighten them away, and such like reasonable or unreasonable excuses repeated endlessly.

'The jack's a greedy fish,' continued our friend. 'One of 'em that was caught here some time back, a regular monster, was found on opening him to have gorged another smaller jack, and this in turn had a smaller fish of some kind within him. That's what I call gluttony. I've been told, too, that the farmer used to miss a lot of his newly hatched ducklings, and he never could make out how it was they disappeared so mysteriously, till one day a young one, who had just taken to the water, was discovered with his head bitten off, and they say as how it must have been a jack as did it, and so that accounted for the disappearance of his broods.'

When starting upon our journey in the morning, we had planned our wanderings no farther than to Michelham Priory, so when at last the time came for us to depart we had no idea as to where our next stage would be. So much the better, we rejoiced in such freedom; there was something very delightful in having no fixed plans to carry out, and great was the charm in not knowing at all what we should do or see each day. This freedom is impossible to him who trusts to railways, coaches, or steamboats; for

he is at the mercy of time-tables, and the route once settled cannot be well changed. Such a planless tour as ours possesses a special attraction for those who for so many months in the year chafe under the restraints of society, with all its wearying routine, its ceremonial observances, combined in all probability with the compulsory exactness of a professional or a business life. To such, an outing like ours is a real restful holiday—an ideal holiday, I think I may add.

I have said that upon leaving Michelham we had no idea as to where we should go next; our road and guide-books were safely out of harm's way in the boot, and we purposely let them remain where they were, so that they might not influence our decision in any manner. But for all that it did not take us long to make up our minds. Were not the far-spreading downs before us; and, sheltering in their hollows and remote recesses, were there not quaint old-time villages to be discovered—villages that have changed little for centuries, in spite of the changing times? An old England set in the midst of the new. In this practical age they have successfully retained the poetry of a past civilisation. 'The steamship, the railway, and the thoughts that shake mankind' have in no way affected them. Secure in the fastness of the railless, almost roadless downs, they seem beyond the power of the levelling influences of this nineteenth century of slavish uniformity. These downs, that Gilbert White rightly deemed 'magnificent,' though some people, who have travelled everywhere and seen nothing, have sneered at his outspoken praise;

but, after all, Gilbert White was right, these downs *are* magnificent. Height is not all in all, there is a grandeur of form as well; and these swelling mighty uplands, stretching away and away indefinitely rising and falling in vast sweeping curves, are more suggestive of endless extent than the highest snow-clad peak, whose summit the eye can range; but to the vision these downs are endless. Height, after all, is only relative: these downs have the majesty of apparent endlessness.

So direct to the downs we determined we would go—as direct, that is, as the winding Sussex by-roads would permit. By the way, we have found these roads and lanes to wind in and out and double about in a manner that would not disgrace the more famous ones of Devon. It is really no joke to get lost upon them in the wilds of unfrequented Sussex, for you may travel miles thereon without meeting a soul or even a friendly signpost; and it may chance that, when you do meet one or the other, you may discover to your sorrow that you have arrived at a spot some weary miles away from where you had fondly hoped to find yourself. Hampton Court maze is as nothing to some of the Sussex by-ways—that has a plan, they have none.

So, as I have said, towards the downs we steered our course—not a very straight one it proved, though beautiful as to scenery; and as we were in no hurry, what mattered it that our way was long so as it was agreeable? I never knew a straight road (with all for miles ahead revealed, and therefore no pleasant surprises possible) to yield an enjoyable drive or

ramble. There may be such a one to be found, but so far I have failed to discover it.

Through woods and over commons our way led us, past green meadows and red tilled fields; now in gloomy shade it took us; anon high up along hedgeless wilds, with a smiling sunlit landscape all around; till at last we arrived at the foot of the downs, although more than once, so did our lane twist about, we found ourselves actually travelling away from our would-be destination, and it almost seemed as if we were destined never to arrive anywhere. But, like all things else in the world, the longest lane comes to an end in time, or, to put it more poetically, as the old monks had it, 'Be the day weary, or be it long, at length it ringeth to evensong.' Our destination was certainly an indefinite one—somewhere at the foot of the downs—therefore, considering the ample margin we had, it would have been strange had we missed it even in spite of the perverseness of the road.

At the corner of a common, where four roads met, we came upon three large milk tins, holding several gallons each, set down upon the grass. They stood there alone, without any one in charge or in sight. Chancing afterwards to meet an old man, we inquired of him why they were so left. 'Oh,' he replied, 'the farmers leave 'em there every day, some one comes along and collects 'em with others, and takes 'em on to ——.' I have forgotten the name of the place he said. 'Does nobody ever rob the milk?' 'Well, I never heard as they did, or I suppose they would not leave it so; there's not many

people about this part, it's wild like; I often walks about here and seldom comes across a soul; it's a lonesome country.' Surely, we thought, we must have entered into an ideal land, such honesty is almost phenomenal; for though it might be a 'lonesome' part of the world, we supposed people did sometimes pass this way. Or perhaps it may be that a little milk does get stolen now and again, and the farmers allow for such loss as a matter of policy, finding this rough-and-ready method the cheapest way of getting their goods to market. However that may be, I only relate facts as they came under our observation. Should any gipsies one fine morning come by chance this road, and discover those milk tins unguarded thus, I should marvel much if their contents found their market without a heavy toll being taken first.

Next we came to Wilmington, a charming little hamlet nestling in a wooded hollow, right alongside a great spur of the downs. A picturesque spot with a curious old church; some of the interior walls of this are faced with chalk of a peculiarly hard nature, it being actually employed instead of stone. I know not whether chalk has ever been put to such a use before; I certainly have never observed it to be so employed. Wandering into the churchyard, we noticed a very fine yew, possibly more ancient than even the grey old fane itself, hoary with years though it be. Near to this tree is a massive stone lying on the ground. As this appeared likely to possess a history, we afterwards made inquiry respecting it, and were told that it covers the remains of a

former clerk of the parish, so placed at his wish. Moreover, we were informed that it is supposed to be of ancient Druidical origin; but from all that we could gather, this appears to be mere conjecture, for in times past any large stone in a strange position, that could not be otherwise accounted for, was fathered upon the Druids.

Alongside the church stand the remains of Wilmington Priory, the second old monastic ruin that we had come across that day. Like Michelham, what little is left of this once religious edifice has been converted into a farmhouse. Here too, as well as there, the gateway tower is the best preserved, and in its ruined state forms a picturesque object. We had our camera unpacked and photographed this; and the worthy farmer coming out, we had a short chat with him. He told us that several people had painted and photographed the old place, and kindly showed us the best point of view 'where everybody took it from.' Why will people so monotonously for ever repeat each other? In order to give no offence, we pretended to take the building from the spot pointed out as the proper one, but afterwards we went to the back of the tower and secured a view which we were assured 'no one else had ever taken,' and for all of which we deemed the most worthy of being reproduced. Why is it, I wonder, that photographers will not dare to be original in this respect? Who is there who has visited some beautiful and much photographed country (take the Lake District, for instance) that has not observed how practically the same set of hack-

neyed views are wearily repeated, as though there were no other standpoint—just as if Nature were limited instead of exhaustless in her prospects. At one portion of our journey we came upon a professional photographer engaged in taking a set of views of the country; and during our conversation with him we actually discovered that he had, previous to his business excursion, possessed himself of a series of views taken by another professional, in order that he might get an idea where to go, and not waste time in selecting a point of view! Poor man! Could folly further go? No wonder people exclaim at the want of feeling in photographs. But, after all, perhaps I may be unjust in blaming the man—had he not his living to get?—and it may be that I should rather lay the blame upon the commercial competition of our age. The photographer's time was money—it was necessary for him to secure as many views as possible that day; he could not afford the time to look about and hunt up fresh subjects or new ways of treating old ones; so we get such art as a matter of commerce—and much good may it do us.

Leaving Wilmington, our road—a rough lane now—wound round the sides of the downs, and to the left we had an excellent prospect of the Wilmington Giant—a large figure of a man, with a pole in either hand, cut out of the turf *à la* the more famous White Horse of Berkshire. Prehistoric this strange figure—rude, enigmatical. Who made it, and for what mysterious purpose? A riddle now impossible to solve; we can only suggest motives,

more or less problematical, for its existence. Possibly our best guesses are wide far of the mark. Personally we have our own particular views on the subject, differing wholly from those most generally accepted ; but where all is mere conjecture, guesses are not very profitable. Three or four such figures —always, strangely enough, on the green sloping sides of downs, and in each instance visible far and near—have we come across during our various drives. It would appear to us that these figures were cut for certain special purposes, and as well that at one time their numbers were probably considerable. Indeed, when we remember the long centuries that they have existed, and how readily the bare chalk is covered up by the ever-growing grass—for Nature left alone will ever, with her tender hand, heal and hide such bare spots—it is to me supremely astonishing that any have remained at all to us. Even this old Wilmington Giant is now (1886) getting somewhat obliterated by the encroaching grass, notwithstanding the fact that so late as the year 1874 the whole figure was carefully and painstakingly re-marked, white bricks being put in place of the less enduring chalk.

Some persons have ingeniously suggested that the monks of the priory may possibly have cut, or caused the figure to be cut, thus. But why ? As such puzzling figures exist elsewhere, and, for reasons I have given, possibly in early days very many more may have been scattered every here and there over the land, does it not appear more probable that the monks simply preserved what they found

already existing, rather than that they originated the strange figure themselves ?

Leaving, then, the Wilmington Giant in his mysterious, sphinx-like loneliness and silence, we continued on our way, the road gradually rising as we journeyed on : and as we rose so our horizon widened out. Right into the heart of the downs it led us, on by the tiny hamlet of Lullington, a parish in which 'there is only one ratepayer, and only two children returned of an age to need education ;' so the School Board has not yet invaded Lullington. Though it is related, upon it coming to the knowledge of the Board of Education in London that the parish was without a school, they ordered the formation of one without delay, but precipitately withdrew their demands when they learnt fuller particulars. It does not always do to act hastily, like the over-zealous officer who, upon questioning a labourer upon the number of his children and as to their education, received reply that he had two who did not go anywhere to school ; whereon the officer ordered him forthwith to send them to one, and further was informed that 'he would be main glad, only they might not go if he told 'em, for they were both over twenty-one years of age.'

This hamlet boasts of 'the smallest church in England,' a claim which, however, is contested by other places. Indeed, during our wanderings we have come upon more than one remote hamlet asserting for itself this proud distinction. So, like the pilgrim of old who was shown three separate skulls of John the Baptist, it is not an easy matter to decide which

of the number is the genuine one. However, the tiny church at Lullington is but about twenty feet long, so that the Lullingtonites may truthfully lay claim to possessing one of the smallest, if not actually the most diminutive, places of worship in the land. The congregation amounts only to nineteen persons, all told, and of course even this number is lessened by inevitable absentees. In the churchyard there are a few gravestones, the only legible records of the ages of the dead on which give the youngest to be 76 and the oldest 98.

Winding round the gigantic spur of the downs, with glorious prospects ever before us, we entered upon the peaceful little valley of the Cuckmere, through which natural opening in the chalk hills that tiny toy river finds its way to the last resting-place of all rivers, the all-absorbing sea. I have come across many more important streams in wild America, as far as size that is, that do not even possess the honour of a name, much less the title of 'river'; or, if they have a name, I failed to discover it either from inhabitant or map. Indeed, in one part of that vast country where streams are many and names for them seemed to be exhausted, we observed, presumably in order to save the trouble of inventing new ones, that the people had taken to the prosaic expedient of numbering these as they do their streets. Third River, Fourth River, Seventh Bend. How practically unromantic, how commercially commonplace! Fancy taking a row on Fifth River, after travelling from your home in, say, Number 329 Sixth Street. How charmingly poetical! Is the coming age to be mathematical

as well as mechanical? Are numbers to supersede names? Is all individuality to be merged into mere meaningless figures? At any rate, let us hope, if so, that London will be city Number One.

On the opposite side of the valley to that we were on our eyes caught sight of a little village snugly ensconced in trees, with what appeared from the distance to be a remarkably fine old church with tapering spire keeping watch over all. We determined, if we could find any means of crossing the little river, that we would explore this remote spot, which we made out from our maps to be Alfriston.

We were upon high ground, the country around was spread out chart-like before us, and, following with our eyes the sinuous course of the Cuckmere, which wound in and out of the landscape like a ribbon of silver, we came upon a spot where a bridge crossed it. So we drove on, making for the direction of the bridge. A long steep descent, then a bit of undulating road, on past some aged and weathered farm buildings, then for an agreeable change along a level stretch of way, with rich green meadows on either side in which cattle were lazily luxuriating, and we reached and crossed the bridge in question, and shortly afterwards found ourselves in the one ancient street of Alfriston. A very picture this, with its red-roofed houses, each so sturdily individual, its old disused market-place with its ancient and weather-worn cross, backed by the swelling rounded downs; all things telling of the past, the whole picturesquely irregular street giving a charming impression of antiquity, a feeling of

A SOUTH DOWN VILLAGE ALFRISTON

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homely repose doubly delightful because so rare in these days of hurry and bustle, rushing railways and glaring and flashing electricity.

A dreamy place, looking half asleep in the soft sunshine, our modern phaeton somehow appeared out of place amid its antique surroundings, and the noise of our wheels seemed unnaturally loud; we felt as we drove along that the smart phaeton was out of harmony with all else, nothing more modern than the old-fashioned postchaise would be in keeping with the place. But our thoughts were suddenly arrested. What was that we beheld straight before us? What a start of delightful surprise we gave! We actually rubbed our eyes. Were we dreaming? Verily no; though almost too good to be true, still it was a positive fact. And what think you, kind reader, was it that delighted us so? Something uncommon, surely. Truly; yet it was only a small wayside hostelrie; but such an hostelrie—you might search all broad England through and not come upon its like. It was a reality worthy of a poet's ideal!

A quaint, most quaint, weather-tinted, time-mellowed solid bit of old-time architecture was that ancient inn—a picture in wood and stone, more gratifying to look upon than any painted canvas. An ideal village hostel such as a novelist of the romantic school might rejoice to invent, but hardly what you would expect to meet with out of a picture or a book; still all the same there it stood before us, a delightful reality—not a dream nor yet a vain imagining.

As we pulled up before it, and, descending from the phaeton, entered beneath its massive oaken doorway, we looked around almost expecting to see some gay care-for-nothing cavaliers making merry over their goblets, so did the antiquity of the place impress us. Such a feeling may appear fanciful; but, for all that, to us it was a very real one. Such impressions are not to be reasoned upon: perhaps it arose because we so seldom or ever see such romantic interiors, full of hovering shadows, with their general air of mystery and antique flavour, out of pictures—pictures in which the artist delights to introduce some incident in which stern Roundheads or rollicking Cavaliers take a prominent part.

It is just one of those charming old-fashioned hostels, of which, alas! there remain so few like this one unaltered, just as it was when first built—a hostel whose very walls are romances and around whose chambers past memories seem to cling. More than three long centuries have passed over it—three hundred chequered years; yet it looks strong and stable still, as though fit to brave centuries to come. I, old as it is, would rather take a lease of its natural life than of many a modern villa I wot of. So far the restorer has harmed it not, though the village painter has done his best—or worst—to disfigure the curious old carvings which decorate its front: rare carvings these, giving something for the learned antiquary to ponder about or quarrel over.

But in attempting to describe this charming relic of a bygone age I am attempting that which is beyond my powers. Indeed, it is just one of those

places that beggar mere word-description, and that make the poor artist feel how limited, after all, are both pencil and brush to do such justice. Still, the old inn has been lovingly described by a writer whose name I know not; and possibly his description of it is as good as words can make it, for some things are 'unreached of words.' We came upon this, of all places, in the pages of a London paper—the *St. James's Gazette* to wit; how the writer came across this remote spot I know not, but he owns his surprise at the unexpected revelation. It was in an article therein, headed 'Ideal and Material Greatness in Architecture,' that we found this inn thus graphically described: 'One of the very grandest pieces of domestic building I ever saw is a little village inn of extremely early date in a Sussex village which scarcely anybody has heard of. This village is Alfriston. It has in its little market-place an exceedingly ancient stone cross, far gone in decay, having never been touched by the restorer. The whole village has an air of antiquity such as breathes from no other English village I have ever seen; but older than anything, except the cross, is its hostelry. Coming upon it quite unprepared for seeing anything in particular, this house fairly took my breath away.' So some one else besides ourselves has experienced a delightful thrill of pleasure on first coming upon this bit of old England. Alas! such experiences are wofully rare. Then the writer, who is evidently an architect, goes on to say: 'Coming upon it was like coming, in a newspaper article, upon three or four lines of great and unknown poetry. It seems never

to have been touched, except here and there by the house painter, since the date at which it was raised, which was probably in the fifteenth century, the carved foliage in the spandrels of the small arched doorway indicating that period. The bedroom story projects considerably over the ground floor, and is borne by great oak brackets, the faces of which are adorned with painted carvings of figures in mitres, one being St. Hubert, as is shown by the stag at his feet. The three windows of the upper floor are bays, and are carried by ponderous spread brackets, carved and painted with most curiously quaint and simple representations of St. George and the Dragon and symbols of his tradition, the tails of two dragons in the central bracket running in their extremities into the outlines of a pointed and foliated arch. The roof is covered with ponderous slabs of ragged-stone, which, assuming, as I do from memory, that there are about 1,400 square feet of surface, must weigh between seventy and a hundred tons. The dimensions of the timbers of the roof are proved inferentially by the fact that the roof-tree has not sagged an inch under some four hundred years of this burden.'

An excellent description in truth, yet, unless our eyes deceived us, the roof has given way slightly here and there—a very little certainly, only just sufficient to pleasantly break the formality of the straight lines of the slabs—an undulating irregularity infinitely more charming than any mathematical precision. This and the inevitable weather-stains are the beauty of an ancient tiled or slab roof. A new roof must

be even, it would be mere affectation to produce wilful curves and bended outlines of set purpose, admire them how we may when they are the unsought-for gift of age. It was a grand roof that, of a kind seldom to be seen in this day of doing all things for the least expenditure; such a one would stand, under ordinary circumstances, for generations without requiring a farthing outlay for repairs. How tenants of modern houses would appreciate one like it!

Upon our return to town we searched in all likely and unlikely quarters for any information respecting this ancient building; and to show how some people appreciate the good things that chance brings before them, we give the following extract from a long article in the 'Art Journal,' where this most interesting structure is dismissed in four contemptuous lines, thus: 'There is an old inn at Alfriston, but the carvings which adorn its timbered front are of a rude and inartistic character. It adds interest, however, to the village street, which, with its relics of a market-cross, is a picturesque one.' Surely it is passing strange for a journal devoted to art to write thus—perhaps the writer only admires modern art; and, on the other hand, that it should be left for a London evening paper, a newspaper pure and simple, to point out its beauties!

Now, as to the carvings on this ancient inn, these are as interesting as they are curious, if, indeed, grotesque would not be a fitter term to employ. How came such a village hostelrie, in a corner of the world so remote, to possess these fanciful and strangely

carved features, and what is their meaning? Let us see what we can make out of them—our conclusions of course being open to dispute; but as their origin is lost in dim antiquity, their history and purpose long forgotten, there is only left for us to make the best of them we can. Wonderful to relate, for once tradition, generally so busy when history is silent, in this case is silent too.

The figures, then, upon the two brackets on either side of the doorway are mitred; one is probably intended to be St. Hubert, for reasons already given, the other possibly is St. Julian, the guardian saint of travellers; then there is St. George with the dragon, this without doubt; and upon the large supporting bracket at the corner are two strange animals, either climbing up or supporting a ragged staff, which of the two they are doing I defy any one to tell. The staff has some kind of an ornament at the top—what it means we could not in any wise make out; perhaps it never meant anything but was intended merely for a decorative finish. The two animals, after some careful study of their peculiarities, we presumed respectively to be a lion and a bear. As to the lion, as he boasts of a mane I think there can be no reasonable doubt about him; concerning the bear I should not like to speak so positively, though, if the wooden effigy be not meant for one, I should much like to know what other animal, fabulous or otherwise, it in the least resembles. Then, to complete all, beneath this stands a large and coarsely carved lion, evidently, from its rougher workmanship, not belonging in the first place to the inn. This was painted a startling red,

the glaring colour and leering features being enough to enrage the mildest-mannered bull into doing something rash. As we expected, we learnt from the landlady that this had nothing whatever to do with the original structure, it being neither more nor less than the figurehead of some vessel that was wrecked off the coast, and had found its resting-place inland here, far from its old home, the sea. Curiously enough, this odd addition harmonised with its older surroundings, giving an added quaintness to the view of the house.

Now arises the pertinent question: How came this grand bit of building—grand, I mean, in construction, not in size, for mere vastness is not grandeur—with all its curious and rare carved woodwork, in this out-of-the-way small hamlet? There appears to be but one answer to the question at all probable—namely, that it was a pilgrim's hostelrie, where these religious wanderers rested upon their way to Chichester and other frequented shrines. This would account for the mitred figures, otherwise in strange keeping with the exterior of a roadside inn; account also for one of the saints by the doorway being St. Julian, the patron of pilgrims and travellers; a sufficient cause also for the erection of such a building here, within easy access of the sea, by the narrow valley of the Cuckmere, thus affording accommodation for visitors from other lands to English shrines, of which the number was not few.

I have said that the painter has done his very best to disfigure these quaint carvings with daubs of thick crude colours; but when we first came upon the

building it had not suffered this indignity. It was on making a second and special visit to this interesting spot that we discovered his doings, our indignation in time overcoming our first feeling of dismay. The amount of mental abuse we heaped upon that wretched dauber would—but I will say no more about him: he knew no better, and after all it was more possibly the fault of the people who employed him than the poor man himself; and we even felt grateful somewhat, when we thought with fear and trembling how much greater the havoc would have been had the restorer only been let loose upon it. What a rare meal for him! How he would have delighted to have improved out of existence or recognition this unique bit of true old English architecture! I will therefore merely content myself with remarking that this genius of the brush we discovered had painted St. George with a scarlet coat, and in other ways had made him as like a modern British soldier as paint could make him. I wonder what the old craftsman would think if he could come to life again and behold his work thus displayed and glorifying in a bright red coat of paint. St. George a 'redcoat'! Also, I may just add that not alone has he been contented with giving the dragon one fierce eye in his head, where his eye should be, but he has as well adorned the end of his tail with one!

I should much like to give a sketch of this dear old hostel—this and others, perhaps not quite so interesting, yet exceedingly charming and eye-pleasing still, for we came upon many such during our journey;

but I fear if I gave way to my inclinations, the most, if not nearly all, my illustrations would be of old inns. And it may chance that my love for these picturesque specimens of old-time building is not equally shared by my readers. For myself, I can never pass by such an ancient hostelrie, without an intense longing to wander about its olden chambers, to explore its ins and outs, and in my mind's eye to re-people it once again with the people of a past day, to restore it to its ancient glory. How suggestive these hostelries are of the picturesque past, when the roads of England were the highways of the land! Shorn of their great glory, many of these old inns truly remain to us, but the times how changed; for we read that in years long past, when 'Strap and Roderick Random halted at the roadside tavern, the roguish landlord spoke Latin, and among the company were the curate cheating the exciseman at cards, the rector, about whom the curate told unimproving tales, and the highwayman, who, though a gentleman of indifferent morals, had his ideas of honour outraged by the coachman giving information to a rival when in his service.'

A South Down Windmill

CHAPTER VIII.

An Old-time Kitchen—Curiosity Hunters—An Ancient Game—Alfriston Church—A Model Building—A Pre-Reformation Vicarage—Old Cottages and New Ones—Seaford, Past and Present—A Team of Oxen—Primitive Ploughs—A Farmer's Opinion of 'Townfolk'—Exploring the Downs—Their Solitude and Silence—A Lonely Spot—An Extensive Prospect—Bracing Breezes—Friston Church—Fame—East Dean—A Rural Inn—A Crooked Church—An Englishman's Love of the Sea—'The Great Name of England.'

INTERNALLY, the 'Star' at Alfriston bears evidence of having been altered from time to time to meet changing and various requirements; still withal it possesses a genuine old-world flavour, with its blackened oak beams, leaden lattice windows, ancient doorways, carved woodwork, and other things that belong to such Early English structures. Owing doubtless to these alterations the geography of the house is somewhat puzzling, but the planless arrangement of the rooms and its rambling passages are a delightful contrast to the monotonous uniformity of London builders' houses, where one featureless plan serves for a complete terrace, or even in some

cases a whole street. In town we secure room by ascending, here it is gained by spreading out; the former mode of procedure limits the possibilities of variations in a plan, in the latter they are endless.

The landlady kindly allowed us to inspect the old kitchen, of which we caught an attractive glance in passing. Somehow at these rural inns one seems to be on a friendly footing with every one; there is no freezing formality about them, rather a feeling of homely welcome—a feeling which doubtless caused Shenstone to write his well-known verses in praise thereof. In them you are treated more as an honoured guest than a stranger, the very reverse of which obtains at their degenerate successor, the modern limited liability hotel, where you are handed over to the tender mercies of a stony-eyed barmaid or funeral-like waiter in seedy black, who is most noticeable for his attentions when the time for departure and the inevitable tip arrives. In the one you are addressed by your proper name, in the other you simply become a numbered nonentity.

The one eyesore about the kitchen is the new-fangled cooking-range, that stands in the ample fireplace, so utterly out of harmony with the ancient apartment. A modern Birmingham cooking-range in an English kitchen four centuries old! What an anomaly! All things else massive, substantial, and mightily constructed: this trumpery cast-iron affair, with its cheerless mite of a fire, and its stupid arrangements for baking and spoiling instead of roasting good meat—how pitifully mean it looked!

Over the large fireplace we observed a curious

relic—a bit of old machinery, hand made, cunningly devised to turn the great joints that erst were roasted here before a right roaring fire. The landlady told us 'as how some gentlemen from South Kensington Museum' had been to inspect it with the idea of purchase, but, as some portion was missing, they refused to make an offer for what remained. What a bit of good fortune! But why should these 'gentlemen from South Kensington' compete with those from Wardour Street, and go hunting about the country to purchase and remove from their proper homes these stored-up treasures of the past? Surely old oak carved chests, fire-backs, and irons, specimens of ancient ironwork, spinning-wheels, quaint examples of our ancestors' furniture, and the like, are better worth seeing in their intended place and position than when transferred to that overcrowded collection of odds and ends that are gathered together in that confusion-crowded storehouse at Kensington? And how interesting these old things are, when seen in the midst of their time-dimmed and suitable surroundings; remove them, and something modern and cheap takes their place, the charm of associations is for ever broken—and oh, the pity of it! So we were delighted to learn that in this case those 'gentlemen from South Kensington' had been for once over particular. On a table in this kitchen the landlady pointed out to us some cut lines, 'which formed,' she said, 'part of an old game that they used to play at, long years ago'—the name she did not remember, 'though she had heard it.' We took a careful look at the table, and observed thereon a number of

squares or oblongs, rudely cut, but the indented marks had been so obliterated with constant scrubbings that we were unable to make much of them. 'How old is the house?' we ventured to inquire as we left. 'Well, I can't rightly tell exactly, but they do say it's over five hundred year old,' was the reply we received to our query.

Strangely enough, just as I had completed the last chapter, a friend called my attention to the fact that Harrison Ainsworth had before me discovered and written about this old inn. Moreover, he presented me with a copy of 'Ovingdean Grange,' in which the account is given at the commencement of Chapter IV., Book the Seventh. This account is specially interesting, as mentioning particulars, gathered many years ago, of what formerly existed here. It also curiously confirms our opinion that this was once a Pilgrims' inn, though I cannot at all agree with Mr. Ainsworth in converting our lion and bear into two monkeys; in all the rest of his remarks, however, I concur. As it is of interest, I have transcribed a portion of his description here, though what authority he had for his statements respecting the early uses of this hostel, I know not.

The 'Star' at Alfriston, happily still existing, is one of the best specimens to be met with of an ancient English hostelry. Dating back as far as the early part of the sixteenth century, this curious old building was originally designed as a resting-place for pilgrims and mendicant friars, and was meant, moreover, to afford sanctuary to such as claimed ecclesiastical protection. The woodwork of the ancient hostelry is enriched with quaint and grotesque carvings, all of which are imbued with mediæval character and spirit. On either side of the wide-arched portal are saintly figures,

and under the windows of the door may be seen two snakes with tails entwined. At the corner of the structure is a large carved lion, and over it two apes sustaining a mace crowned. Near the sign-post there used to be a dog, and beside it a bacchanalian figure with bottle and glass ; but these, and doubtless many other equally curious memorials of the past, are gone. Within there are other traces of antiquity. On the main beam of the principal room is a shield, inscribed with the sacred characters I H.S.

Next we found our way to the old church, which had pleased us so from the distance; nor did it disappoint us upon a nearer inspection ; indeed, it was even more interesting and beautiful than we were prepared to find. The church is a cruciform one, with a spire finely springing from a tower in the centre. Perfectly proportioned in all its parts, it is one of the most pleasing country churches it is possible to imagine, as far as its design goes. There is a simple dignity about it, a grace of form, that is very charming to the trained eye, a grandeur also that comes of well-ordered space, and that cannot be excelled in the most magnificent cathedral. It is a telling example that proves how true Gothic work, in the master-hand, can be as impressive in the humble village fane as in the most majestic monumental pile. There is an indescribable something in the chaste design, the blended lines all upward tending, crowned by the pointed central spire, that leads the eye unknowingly, as it were, from earth to heaven : a cathedral in miniature, a gem of a country church, a model for all ages of what such structures should be. The greatest architect might be proud to have designed it. Men of old must have put their whole heart into their work to have

excelled so; they seem to have expressed their faith in their building.

It seemed to us that the church exists now as originally designed, not added to, or taken from, or altered in any way structurally, for it has an unmistakable look of unity; and how few country churches there are that remain to us so unimpaired! The outer walls are of flints carefully broken into squares, and faced at the sides with stone. These flints possess a quality of semi-translucency that is both pleasing and effective, and possess, moreover, the most desirable virtue of resisting all weathers; they do not crumble with age, split with frost, or chip like softer stone; they seem to endure for ever, and their employment here shows a happy and appropriate use of local materials, and imparting likewise a certain individuality to the structure.

I know not when I have seen a village church that has pleased me so, and come up to my ideas of what such edifices should be. The corners of each wall are supported by graceful buttresses, ornamental as well as useful; these give the pile a substantial look, as though it had been intended for all time, not for a day. It is massive yet graceful, refined yet of bold design, simple yet not wanting in ornament, and grandly built though only a village fane.

Two women were standing at the church door, and before we entered we ventured to remark to one of them, 'You have a fine church here.' 'Yes, that we have,' she replied, 'and we've had it restored inside.' This was not good news to us, though she seemed proud of the fact, and was evidently sur-

prised that we did not enter into her feelings of pleasure about the matter; then after a pause she continued, 'We're very poor about here, so we could not afford to restore the outside as well, so, as you will see, it's only been repaired and is much as it was.' All of which prepared us for what was coming. We gave a glance inside: our worst suspicions were confirmed. What a contrast to the delightful exterior! Here was a cold and feelingless void, a dreary desolation. In truth, the woman spoke correctly; it had been restored. Well, poverty is sometimes a blessing in disguise. What a pity the place was not even poorer, so that the interior might have simply been repaired! The very words, restore and restorer, have become hateful to me; but too well I know their import.

Near to the church we noticed a half-timbered building converted into two cottages. This we observed had a Gothic doorway, and bore other signs of better days, and these suggested to us that possibly it might in former times have been the vicarage. So we asked the question, and found that our surmises were correct. 'Yes, that used to be the parson's house, I've heard say, but that were years ago before my time; but bless you, sir, parsons are too grand nowadays to live in the like.' Possibly; still withal, were it in good repair, were I a clergyman, I would prefer that picturesque though humble abode for my vicarage before the brand-new house that now does duty for one. 'So I suppose,' we remarked, 'that the new buildings are more comfortable than the old ones?' This to see what reply the

woman would make, and to obtain, if possible, her opinion on the subject. 'Well, sir,' she said, 'if you asks me, I prefer the old 'uns, and I've lived in both, so I ought to know; for if the rooms is low the walls is thick in the old cottages, and they are warm in winter, and there is more room in 'em.' 'Then, after all, you would rather have the old cottages?' 'Ay, sir, that I would. They don't look so smart like outside, but they are more cosy and comfortable to live in; leastwise, I thinks so.' So it may be after all that these poor 'folk' are not so bigoted in reality, though they do so stupidly cling to their old homes, and do not appear so supremely grateful as they should when some would-be kind and improving landlord builds smart new cottages, with thin walls and large windows, for them, and it may chance in spite of their apparent ingratitude for the good things provided for them, that they have sound reasons for their preference of the old. In spite of the political economist, who is so anxious that poor people should be provided at somebody else's expense with model dwellings, which they maintain on paper are so superior (they have not to live in them), I am by no means sure that the poor people do not know their own requirements the best, and that these old cottages are not in reality more comfortable to live in, as well as more picturesque to look upon.

Out of Alfriston the road winds between the downs, tree-girt and with a windmill-crowned height in front—a ready-composed picture, waiting for some one to come and paint it. I wonder if the artist has

ever come? Then our way became hilly and open, and crossing the downs we came in sight of the gleaming silvery sea, high up in the horizon before us, and wafted inland came that unmistakable scent of ozone-laden air, and presently we reached the sleepy little town of Seaford. Seaford was—and possibly is to be, rather than is—once a port of some importance; but the Ouse, finding another outlet to the sea, its harbour became choked up, and, with the disappearance of the smugglers who flourished here, the last remaining prosperity of Seaford departed. But as there is no chance of getting the river back again, and with it some of her bygone commercial prosperity, Seaford is doing the only thing that is left for it to do—namely, endeavouring to set itself up for a watering-place. The consequent necessity of this—a process of levelling, parading, and street laying out—has robbed the town of its old natural look. It possesses, therefore, all the disadvantages of a place in the course of development, and few of the advantages of a finished town.

What Eastbourne used to be so in a measure is the Seaford of to-day—a seaside village just rising from its old self into a new and wholly different being. Whether the coming Seaford will be a better place to live in than the old one is not for me to say. There is one thing to be said in favour of the place, it is on the west side of Beachy Head instead of the east, as its more prosperous rival of Eastbourne, therefore it is well sheltered from the much-dreaded winds coming from that direction.

The next day we determined to devote to

exploring the downs that lie between Seaford and Eastbourne. We drove as far as West Dean, an old-world secluded village, hidden away in a deep 'combe,' as they would call it in Devonshire, a remote spot that might be a hundred miles from anywhere. We came to the conclusion that the only way properly to see the downs was to tramp across them on foot, and so we sent the phaeton on to Eastbourne to meet us there.

At a farmhouse near here we saw a team—or yoke is it?—of oxen, dragging behind them a cumbersome plough, a picturesque sight, and a somewhat rare one nowadays. Noting the heavy appearance of these primitive ploughs, we ventured to ask a local farmer if something lighter would not work easier, be as serviceable, and do the work equally as well. He replied, 'No. They had tried all kinds, but for the peculiar nature of the work, these old-fashioned ploughs, as used and made by our forefathers centuries ago, could not be approached. Now and then some clever person from town finds his way down here and makes the same remark, and states what an unprogressive benighted lot we are. But I rather fancy we know our business far better than they do, for when I ask them a question about farming, I find they know nothing about it; it just pleases them to talk a lot concerning what they don't understand.' And perhaps after all the farmer was right; for on this light land the plough must be heavy; lightness is an excellent quality, but it may also be a fault. Then by way of a parting shot at the ignorant townsman, he added: 'I should like to

see them come down here with their notions and farm these hilly lands.'

From this spot we struck right across the downs, wandering where we would at our own sweet pleasure, and soon found ourselves alone upon their grassy summits, with a green far-spreading world around, and the dome of blue above. A sense of silence and solitude came over us, a feeling of boundless space that I have not experienced even when standing upon the illimitable prairies of Western America. We were alone with earth and sky.

Above us majestic masses of snow-white clouds were sailing slowly along, causing mighty patches of sunshine and shadow to chase each other over the vast prospect—motion without sound, two things that seem inseparably associated with each other. The swelling downs were everywhere around; glorious sweeps of soft greens, treeless, shrubless; hills one beyond the other seemingly in endless succession, each less pronounced in form and colour, fading gradually away till almost lost to view in the dim uncertain distance, dreamlike and unreal, half sky, half land. How space-expressing all this! Our eyes, confined the greater portion of the year to the house-bound streets of London, rejoiced in their unaccustomed freedom.

A wild wind-swept land, no signs of civilisation, save for the windings of a far-off road, a sinuous white thread rising and falling with the undulating downs, now hidden in a hollow, now reappearing on an uprising slope, growing greyer and greyer as its

distance from us lengthened till lost to vision altogether. But for that suggestive white line, there was no sign whatever of the dominant hand of man —we might have been in the midst of an untrodden world; that alone told of human handiwork, but it was sufficient. For did not that road lead to others, they in their turn to villages and distant towns, and so eventually even to the mighty metropolis itself? There was no getting away from the feeling that, however much alone we might be, that one wandering track of winding white meant communication with man and his thronged cities, with all their crowded unrest. Though standing in the midst of a world almost primeval in its solemn silence and solitude, we were still within touch, as it were, of the 'busy haunts of men.' Nineteenth-century civilisation follows us everywhere; it is hard to escape entirely from it; even these lonesome downs have telegraph wires carried on long lines of monotonous posts across their remotest parts.

After much delightful, though somewhat aimless, wanderings, we espied in the distance an old windmill sharply defined against the white clouds of the sunlit sky, and we determined, for want of a better purpose, to make for this point. A bleak windy spot it proved to be; cool, not to say chilly, even on that hot summer noon, we wondered if it was ever really warm up there, and pitied the miller his quarters in the winter time. At any rate, his mill will seldom be at a standstill for want of motive power, that was one advantage of its exposed situation; on the other hand, it necessitated a stiff and

toilsome ascent for the farmer to bring his corn to be ground.

From this elevated spot the views are really grand, especially looking towards the north: here the eye ranges uncontrolled over a vast expanse of rounded downs, their bare outlines contrasting pleasantly with sheltered wooded hollows at their feet, in which secluded valleys snugly nestle ancient farmsteads and lowly cottage homes, sending up blue films of smoke that lose themselves in the bluer sky above.

The far-extending prospects that these heights afford reveal the existence of an atmosphere, an impalpable something, that causes the distant uplands to assume a dreamy blue dimness, fading away as they do from mystery to mystery. You feel up here that the air has a perceptible quality, that it is something more than a mere colourless void, for as it deepens it tints the remote horizon with an aërial grey, as though the land there were unsubstantial. You feel its veil-like influence pervading all.

Close by the mill stands Friston church, doubtless erected high and away from habitations thus to serve as a landmark to the wanderer over the trackless downs in former times, and it may be as well as a guide to the storm-tossed mariner, thus doing double duty as a place of worship and a beacon. This lowly unpretending structure, simple and substantial, braving all the storms and winds of heaven, grey with age, weather-worn and time-stained, standing stern and solitary, save for a desolate-looking cottage and the gaunt windmill,

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impressed us more than many a grand cathedral has done.

There were no signs of life about, save a few circling gulls with their querulous cries and white glancing wings, the only brightness and movement in the grey-toned picture. How forsaken that humble fane appeared! No stately monuments adorn its quiet God's acre, it is broken only by the grass-grown and perchance unremembered graves of the lowly shepherds or hard-worked tillers of the soil. The sea-borne winds make plaintive melody as they pass over them, chanting a ceaseless requiem to the unknown dead. It is well thus: the weather-worn shepherd and hardy son of the soil sleep none the less soundly, though not even a moss-grown tombstone marks their last resting spot, nor any inscription reveals to the unfrequent wanderer who they are who rest so undisturbedly beneath his feet. Nameless, forgotten, unheeded now, these simple mounds of grassy turf are all that speak of them; yet, simple though they be, they touch the heart of the stranger, tell their story to the passer-by in a way that no ambitious monumental stone could ever do.

As we looked around and adown from our lone elevated position, we seemed, as it were, for the time raised above the world—in it, yet out of it; and how small, from our standpoint, appeared human existence, with all its trivial ambitions, its longings, and disappointments! what a ceaseless struggle for the never-to-be-attained! Generations come and go; some few amongst the many millions, by merit

or happy chance, leave a memory behind—some few whose names and deeds will dwell a little longer than the unfamed rest; but these in turn will be forgotten as the world grows old and fresh centuries are born. As it is, the number of great men multiply so, that they threaten to obscure each other. But moralising is weary work—unprofitable. Yonder in the valley right below are the straggling tiled roofs of a little village, asleep in the soft sunshine: let us get down the steep descent and see what it is like. Besides, the tonic air has given us a healthy appetite, and it may chance that we shall find there some little inn where they offer 'Entertainment for Man and Beast.' However, for once, we shall only have to consider ourselves, for our 'beasts' are probably by this time resting and contentedly munching their oats and hay.

East Dean we discovered was the name of this hamlet. A picturesque collection of houses, built of rounded flints, and grouped about in a happy hap-hazard sort of a manner. A pretty village that an artist might take many a picture from. The cottages were all neat and clean, a few had trailing plants growing over them, and most showed a love for flowers. A typical English hamlet, of a kind that is to be found nowhere out of England.

Here, in front of a rough bit of green, too rough even for rustic cricket, we found a humble inn, yclept 'The Tiger,' where we obtained a frugal meal of bread and cheese, washed down with unadulterated ale. A frugal, still, it seemed to us, a most excellent repast, for the cheese and bread were

good, the ale cool, clear, and sparkling—a draught fit for a king we thought, thirsty souls that we were ; and thoroughly we enjoyed our homely fare. And what more could we have done, even had it been a sumptuous lunch sent up by a famous French *chef* ? Bread and cheese and ale, provided they are good, are things not to be despised by the hungry traveller, and moreover they are to be had at once, without any weary waiting. Better at any rate such, than a greasy chop, badly cooked, or tough meat, which in such out-of-the-way rural hostels may be expected with some degree of certainty.

The church here, as in most of the down hamlets, is a plain, substantial, but picturesque structure : if it lacks ornamentation, it possesses a simple dignity that befits a country fane, and is in better keeping with its rural surroundings than a more elaborate pile would be. A plain structure, if well proportioned, honestly built, and suitable for its purpose, hardly ever fails to gratify the eye. There is a charm about simplicity, a restfulness, and a wholeness, so to speak, for in such the vision is not distracted with detail, it can comprehend the whole at once. Genuine simplicity is very refreshing in these days of over decoration and straining after effect.

This church is notable from the fact that its nave and chancel deviate in a pointed manner from the usual straight line. Though uncommon in England, this is not a singular instance of such a curious departure from the general rule of building, and is manifestly intended, not the result of alteration or accident. On the Continent there are, I believe,

several examples of this strange unarchitectural method of proceeding. As for the reason of it, antiquaries cannot agree amongst themselves; the most plausible explanation these learned bodies have vouchsafed is that it typifies the writhing on the cross—hardly a satisfactory one, it appears to me, although, in want of a better, it has become generally accepted.

Opposite to our inn we observed by the side of the road an old-fashioned well, with a windlass to raise the bucket; this was, we were informed, the village water supply—a primitive arrangement, but the bent wood structure lent interest to the village street, and caused us to make a sketch of it from this spot, that we might get it in our picture.

From East Dean we took a little winding road that led along a narrow valley to the sea. A longing that would not be suppressed had taken possession of us; a longing to get within sight and sound of the breaking waves, to hear once again their plaintive melody, to listen to their wild untutored music, to stand upon the surf-beaten shore of the changeless ever-changing sea, and to refresh our lungs with deep inspirations of its invigorating salt-laden air. Exists there an Englishman who does not love the sea?—loves to be near it, to behold it perhaps I should say. If so, I have not met him yet, though I know a countless multitude who object to be upon it.

The love of the ocean seems to be inbred amongst Englishmen. Truly it is Britain's triumphant battle-ground, her high road over all the world, and to her foes 'a fence impregnable.' There was a time, not so

many long years ago, when it was truly said that 'no gun was ever fired upon the high seas without England knowing the reason why.' And this was no empty saying. Nowadays we seem less patriotic. Let us hope it is only seeming. 'John Bullism' is at a discount. Yet it was this very pride of country, a confidence in our right and power, our ability and determination to keep and hold our own, that gave us our world-encircled empire. To be patriotic now is to lay oneself open to the reproach of being called a 'Jingo.' Is all this well? Stands England where she did, or are we going back?

> Gone the cry of 'Forward, forward,' lost within a growing gloom;
> Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.
>
> Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
> Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!
>
> 'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one,
> Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

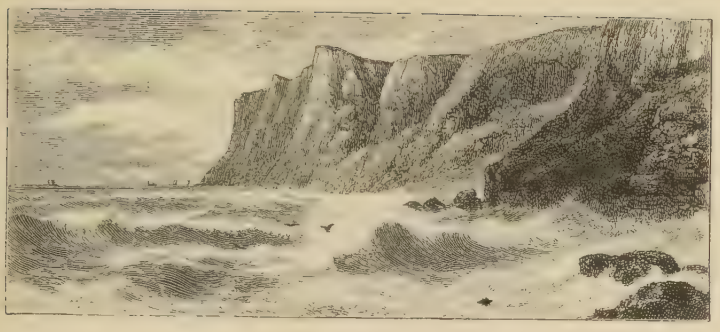
What is the gathered wealth of centuries, our busy money-making cities, our labour and our very lives, if we are not prepared, as of old, to face envious enemies? The surest way for peace and prosperity is not to be warlike, truly, still less certainly to be pusillanimous. To be prepared to defend and hold our own, and to let the world know that we mean to keep that which we have, is the only way to rest unmolested.

'The great name of England,' made and sturdily maintained by our fearless forefathers, whose contempt for their foes, though perhaps not a great quality, is still a greater one than the craven fear that would have peace at any price: this 'great name' has been handed down to us, a precious heritage, a glorious record of valiant deeds in many a stubborn sea-battle and on many a hard-fought field. May we, their descendants, prove worthy of our brave sires, worthy of the noble past; and when the hour of England's need comes, as come it may, God grant that we may rise to the occasion, and hand down to our children unimpaired their magnificent birthright! For though Tennyson, almost despairing of the present degenerate, money-making, talk-and-do-nothing age, writes—

> Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last,

has not even a greater than he—our own true-hearted poet and noble patriot Shakespeare—also written:—

> This England never did, nor never shall,
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Come the corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them: nought shall make us rue
> If England to itself do rest but true?



Beachy Head

CHAPTER IX.

An Old Home—Life at a Farm—A Picturesque Colony of Buildings—A Curious Well—A Startling Discovery—Ghastly Relics—Murder, or What?—Birling Gap—A Seascape—Chat with a Coastguard—A Grand Piano at Sea—A Wasting Shore—A Lighthouse in the Clouds—On Beachy Head—Jottings from my Note-Book—Down Turf—Walking a Pleasure—A Grand Playground for Londoners.

As we wandered along that pleasant road, seaward bound, we came upon an old rambling farmhouse, surrounded by quite a colony of outbuildings. Right through the farmyard our way led us (a curious intrusion of a public road), and even our longings for a sight at and a sniff of the 'briny' were not strong enough to let us pass by without making a sketch of that picturesque old English home; for picturesque it was, in the fullest meaning of the word, with its time-toned rambling barns, great stables, lean to sheds, bent-roofed cowhouses, pigeon-cotes, and I know not what else—their roofs orange with lichen and green and grey with mosses, their walls painted by time a profusion of tints. All

of which weatherbeaten structures were grouped about in a picturesque undesigned irregularity, charming in their practical disregard of uniformity.

A farmstead is generally the scene of life and quiet activity—by which I mean that, though the operations are performed in a manner the reverse of slothful, they do not beget a feeling of restlessness, for there is no apparent bustle and hurrying, no discordant noises, and the sounds are rather peace-giving than nerve-irritating. One can never feel dull in such a spot, the mind is always kept pleasantly occupied, for there is ever something going on to interest the observer—teams starting out or returning, horses watering, cattle lazily drinking, haycarts or corn-laden waggons coming in from the field, cows milking, poultry feeding, and so forth—an endless succession of small events. Something is ever taking place from early morning till the shadows of evening bring the labours of the day to a close. Labours, I have said; but to me the varying occupations of a farm appear more to take the form of a holiday recreation than the monotonous drudgery of toil.

So we found in the ample yard plenty to amuse us for the time—a yard as large as many a village green, for as the down land is cheap, these farmsteads are spread out in a manner unknown in the country where land rents (or used to do) for nearly as many pounds an acre as these wild tracts of prairie ground bring shillings. A large pond in the centre of the yard was the scene of the chief activity. Horses and cows were led down to this to drink, somebody was always fetching water therefrom for one purpose

or another, and ducks and geese made it lively with their constant movement and endless cackling. Here in this open space the incoming teams rested before going to their stables, and the labourers kept crossing and recrossing it upon their different errands. Our sketch-book was out, and several charming and natural bits of farm life were added to its already well-stocked pages.

Truly that old great gabled farm, with its many-paned windows, its tall stacks of chimneys, its weathered and flint-built outbuildings, with the sparkle of water in the foreground, its backing of dark green trees, with the looming rounded downs beyond again, formed a picture delightful to look upon.

Nowadays we build not such farmsteads, with their massive walls, wealth of gables, high-pitched tiled roofs that defy both snow and rain, great beams, general solid and substantial construction, roomy interiors, grand barns, and generous allowance of outbuildings.

A modern farmstead, brick built almost of a certainty, with its thin walls, low-pitched roofs (of chilly slate most probably), small chimneys, scant allowance of barns and other detached structures, with its unmistakable appearance of having been erected by contract upon the principle of getting the most for the least money—how mean and paltry, compared to its old English predecessor, it looks!

A farmhouse and its belongings is not to be built in a day, it is the collected work of generations, of countless alterations, improvements, adaptations—suggested, it may be, even by the fancies of different

farmers, as well as the outcome of practical requirements arising from the varying necessities of long years. Such a happily picturesque collection of buildings is not to be planned all at once—it comes of a natural growth, a growth that takes time to arrive at its picturesque perfection. This growth, too, forms its little history, none the less interesting because unwritten and unknown to the outer world.

I do love these genuine old English farmsteads; they are to me (unambitious as I am) the ideal perfection of a country home, where one may really feel at thorough ease—not too well furnished, that you feel conscious of doing wrong should you come in with muddy boots, as you often do in the country, spacious enough for a moderate mansion, with ample accommodation, in the way of roomy cupboards—which the modern builder seems to deem needless, but which the housewife delights in; but then thin walls will not allow of these convenient contrivances. Then, again, the many odd nooks and corners, how useful for the reception of various odds and ends! The gardens, too, of these old homes, how pleasant they are—large and tranquil, old-fashioned certainly (with perchance a moss-encrusted sundial in the centre), full of old-fashioned flowers, sweet-smelling and colourful; and after all are they not the best?

Yes, a really old English farmhouse, unaltered, unimproved (it may have been an ancient manor house—many of the Sussex ones have—if so, all the better), has a hold upon my affections that no other structure raised as a home for man ever has, unless it be one of the rambling coaching inns of the past;

but these, however delightful in themselves, possess neither the charm of surrounding fields nor the rural life of a farm. About such places there is such a genuine home feeling; their roomy interiors are a delight, after the make-the-most-of-every-inch-of-space we poor Londoners are accustomed to. Their low beamed ceilings, too, how cosy they look! how hospitable and inviting their great fireplaces: how cheerily the crackling logs blaze thereon!—and their spacious kitchens, what a cheerful look they have! how bright and glowing the tin and copper utensils appear, ranged in careful order upon the high mantel; more for ornament than use these, every whit in their way as decorative as the highly priced and easily broken blue and white china, or Dresden figures, that adorn the houses of the wealthy!

Whilst we were amusing ourselves wandering about the farm, watching with much interest all that was going on, the landlady came out—ostensibly to feed her ducks, in reality I believe to see us and indulge in a chat if she found we were so minded. A kindly hearted homely body she seemed, as the mistress of a farmhouse should be, and as they nearly always are, judging from our experience of many such. After a long talk about cattle, crops, corn, and the like, the good-natured body asked us if we would step inside and have a glass of milk. Now we had not the slightest desire to indulge in this manner, but we at once gladly accepted her well-meant offer as an excuse to get a glimpse at the interior of the house.

We entered by a side door—not, evidently, the

main entrance, but the one most generally in use. We were shown along some wandering passages into a sitting-room, manifestly furnished and set apart for visitors and state occasions, not the everyday living-room; for there is an indescribable look about a chamber in constant occupation that can never be mistaken. In this apartment the furniture was all carefully arranged in a prim order, nothing was out of place; half a dozen children turned into it for an hour's romp would vastly have improved the appearance of the room—a little reasonable disorder would have been a relief to the studied and graceless uniformity. But the farmer's wife stands not alone in this respect: I am cognisant of more than one London drawing-room in which, upon each visit, I know full well the exact spot where every bit of furniture will be found, in the same old position as before, even, I verily believe, to an inch more or less—only in this case there is a studied disarrangement of articles, placed so as to secure the most effect; but still withal the arrangement is carefully studied, and on this account equally displeasing. The same uncomfortable feeling asserts itself in either case—that you must not disturb anything for fear of putting it out of place.

Next we were shown into the garden. This was in charming contrast to the orderly room, delighting in disorder as it did; in marked contrast also to the over-prim gardens of suburban Londoners: a kind of cultivated wilderness, in which Nature was allowed to have something of her own wilful way. Even a few weeds were permitted to grow unmolested; but weeds

are not without their beauties, though we have learnt to despise them, so that we cannot see their gracefulness.

Yet that homely garden, to our fancy, was fully as pleasurable—more so in some respects—as many costly instances of highly paid gardeners' genius ; for here one felt one could pluck the flowers if one so wished, there was nothing too rare to be enjoyed, and we could walk upon the grass as we pleased without fear of damaging the carefully kept turf by treading gravel upon it from off the paths.

Returning indoors, we were taken into the large old-fashioned kitchen to get our promised drink of milk ; and what a charming apartment it was—how picturesque, with its brown beamed ceiling, ancient dresser, warm-toned walls, the effect being enhanced by the play of softened light, and the mysterious shadows of its dim recesses ! In a farmhouse such as this, the kitchens are always cheerful, comfortable, and liveable.

' Perhaps,' said our hostess, ' you might prefer a glass of lemonade. I have some of my own making, and for which I am famous.' So we replied that we would try the lemonade upon her recommendation. To make this, she poured out from a small bottle a wineglass-full of some liqueur-like liquid, which she placed in a tumbler and filled up with ' fresh well water.' Whether it was the virtue of the ' well water ' or of the liqueur, or of the two combined, I cannot say, but to us that cool draught of lemonade seemed most delicious—so much so that we ventured to beg for another glass. And then we asked if we

might be allowed to know how the 'stock solution' was made; for it appeared to us an exceedingly simple and easy way of producing lemonade, and a bottle of this carried in the phaeton might be useful to take off the rawness of the innocent drinks we now and then indulged in at the wayside 'burns'; for however pure and refreshing the waters of such may be, they are certainly flavourless. The good body told us that several people had, at different times, asked her for the receipt, and for our benefit she wrote it down. This I have faithfully copied here, in case any of my readers might like to try it for themselves.

RECEIPT FOR LEMONADE.

2 lbs. of loaf sugar;
1 oz. tartaric acid;
1 oz. tincture of orange; and
20 drops of essence of lemon.

Dissolve the sugar and acid in three pints of boiling water: when cold add the tincture of orange and of lemon, then bottle it. A wineglass-full to a tumbler of water.

It may be that it was the warm summer day, our quaint old-world surroundings, that caused us so to enjoy the harmless beverage; for oftentimes our surroundings have more to do than one would imagine with our appreciation of things. We well remember, many years ago now, sojourning at a quaint little hostel in a remote untravelled part of the Continent, sitting upon its open balcony one summer evening, looking down upon a fair lake, encircled by vine-clad hills whose snowy summits were a golden red in the sunset's lingering rays; and as we gazed

upon this bewitching panorama we sipped in a happy state of contented enjoyment some native wine, and it seemed to us then that never before had such a vinous product passed our lips. What a mingled delicacy of flavour and aroma it had! The price of the wine was low, and we ordered a quantity of it to be sent home to England for us, deeming that we had done a clever thing. What a treat we would give our friends on our return!—and we would ask them with pride whether they had ever tasted the like before; and then we would reveal to them how it was that we became the lucky possessors of such a rare article. Alas! its excellence, I fear, was due more to our romantic surroundings than to any inherent merits of the wine; or, as we vainly tried to reason to ourselves, perhaps the transportation had robbed it of its precious qualities; for, upon opening and sampling a bottle in our less romantic London home, we found its contents to be utterly wanting in delicacy of flavour, not to say tart. And I have been told by one who lived in the old coaching days that, chancing to spend a night in a certain country inn, the port that was provided with his dinner appeared to him to be so excellent that he actually purchased the whole stock of it from the landlord and had it forwarded home to him, but experienced, like ourselves, a similar feeling of disappointment upon tasting the wine under different circumstances and less picturesque surroundings.

We were next taken to see the well from which the famous water was drawn. This was situated in an outhouse, built entirely for its accommodation,

so it was no ordinary well. Here we found a huge wooden wheel, like that of a mill, only the motive power exerted upon it was internal instead of external, a poor patient donkey being made use of inside, working it treadmill fashion. We had a glass of the water, from out the bucket, that was raised up in this manner from a depth of upwards of 127 feet. Doubtless this deserved all the praises the farmer's wife lavished upon it; at any rate it was cold, clear, and sparkling, pure beyond question; but more I cannot say, as I do not profess to be a connoisseur of water.

Just as we were bidding our hostess good-bye, a man came up with a basket under his arm. 'See, missus,' he exclaimed, 'what we've found a-digging in yon chalkpit.' For a moment our hearts beat high; perchance his basket was laden with rare Celtic relics, for such treasures are occasionally found in these downs, even in this day. But no; removing a cloth that covered them, there were revealed to us two battered skulls, some bones, and other grim remains of poor humanity. 'And look 'ee here,' continued the man, 'here's some o' the very nails out o' their boots,' and the speaker produced from his pocket some rusty bits of iron that had doubtless served such a purpose. 'We found the skeletons,' he went on, 'about three feet from the top o' the ground. There were only just these bones and rusty nails; the rest has gone to dust long ago. They must have been buried a many years, and in a hurry, or else they would have been put deeper down.'

Here was a promising-looking mystery. How

came those skeletons there? Had some undiscovered crime, in past times, been committed close to this lonely farm? We asked the man's opinion. 'Smugglers,' was his laconic reply. Then, after a thoughtful pause, he continued, 'Them's the remains of smugglers, killed whilst fighting their way with a cargy they'd run in at the gap' (Birling Gap understood). 'Yes, them's the remains of smugglers; I've no doubt about it.' And, having settled the matter, he handed the ghastly relics to the landlady, who took them indoors; and if any of my readers should ever find themselves in this neighbourhood, probably they may be able to view these skulls, bones, and nails, should they feel any curiosity in the matter. Then we departed to inspect the spot where they had been dug up, and to see if we could gather any further particulars from the workmen there.

We had no difficulty in finding the chalkpit; it was only a very short distance away from the house, by the side of the road leading direct to the sea, which would seem to confirm the likelihood of the theory that a severe struggle had taken place near there between a body of preventive men and a gang of smugglers, and that those who had fallen in the fight had been hastily buried on the spot. We saw the impression in the chalk still remaining, showing where the skeletons had been—barely two feet underground to the best of our judgment, clearly proving the hurried nature of the interment. As we could gain no further information, we proceeded on our way to Birling Gap, a hollow in the cliffs giving access to the sea.

Here we found a fresh breeze blowing. Overhead the clouds were travelling apace, and a wild seascape was spread out before us—a waste of angry waters stretching far away, tossing restlessly, a confused chaotic mass. Great curling breakers, foam-crested, came rolling in, one after the other, thundering as they dashed against the steadfast cliffs with a continuous, far-resounding boom, boom, boom, varied only by a momentary hissing, when, baffled and broken, they retreated upon the pebble-strewn beach defiantly, only to re-form once more and renew the ceaseless strife. A ship was passing, wisely keeping well away from shore, her reefed sails bulging with the gale. She rolled uneasily from side to side, ever and again exposing a portion of her coppered bottom, which glowed ruddily in the sun, the only bit of warm colour in the grey picture; then, as in turn her deck came in view, the glasses of her skylights flashed forth heliostat signals; and so she rolled along, fighting her way against the heaving sea, buffeted about, a plaything for the waves.

Here is a coastguard station, with its collection of white and black cottages, prim and neat and clean, as such always are. One of the men connected with the place was patiently watching for the never-appearing smuggler through a weather-beaten telescope; then, after sweeping the horizon carefully round, and being assured there were none in sight, he shut his instrument up, and turned to us, remarking, 'Sea's rough to-day,' manifestly for the purpose of opening up a chat; for life in these lonely parts must become in time a trifle monotonous, even

with the excitement of having to keep a watch upon the smugglers, and a stranger to talk to a relief from the daily repeated routine. 'Blowing a stiffish gale,' he continued. 'Would you care to take a look at her, sir,' pointing to the tossing vessel, and handing his telescope to us. 'She's making bad weather of it; I expects as how she's light in ballast.' 'Rather a lonesome life here, is it not,' we asked him, 'especially in the winter time?' 'It's all that,' he said; 'but we comes here for comfort. It's a pleasant change from aboard ship, and I've had a pretty good turn of service in the navy; yes, I've knocked about the world a bit in my time, being at most foreign stations, and am right glad of a berth ashore, though to be sure, as you said, it's dullish here a' times. Yes, them's the oil cans for the lighthouse above,' noticing us looking wonderingly at a large pile of iron drums. 'A lighter leaves them here once a year. That's a twelvemonth's stock, and they've got to make it last. Smuggling, of course there's none now; the profit's too small and the risk's too great, else they 'ud be at it again somehow or another, if it 'ud pay; but still, we're not altogether idle; we do gets a little excitement now and again. I've seen some wrecks here; the last one was owing to a collision, which took place out there,' pointing indefinitely seaward into space. 'One of them was a fine big ship, with a valuable cargo aboard, bound for India. We had a rare job of it then, getting the things together that came washing ashore. There were a curious lot of articles. What do you think was one of the first things we saw? Why, a grand piany

a-floating away right out to sea; so we gave chase and towed her in.' (It struck us that the sea-bath would hardly improve the value of the instrument!) 'We collected together a whole lot of cases, bales, and the like, and stowed them in a mass, for the time, at the foot of that cliff yonder, till we should be able to get them out of harm's way. But we was terribly unfortunate. Just after we'd been a-working like galley slaves the whole of the blessed day, blame me if a lot of the cliff did not come crashing down and smash everything to bits. Now that's what I call jolly hard lines, as we lost our compensation for goods saved, and had all our work for nothing. Yes, the sea keeps eating the cliffs away here. Do you notice yonder how they overhang?—well, a lot of it will come down soon; then the high tides will wash the fallen chalk away, and the waves will begin undermining the cliffs again; the land's wasting away here at a great rate. Last winter a ship run ashore, one foggy night, right under the head yonder. We went out to see if we could be of any help; but the water was smooth, and as she was on the sand she was all right for the time. The captain shouted out to us to ask where on earth he was; so we shouted back, "Close under the lighthouse by Beachy Head." "Bless my heart," he cried, "what a place to put a lighthouse, right up there in the clouds!" She got off next tide all right. But the captain was right: the lighthouse should be lower down; only those clever people who manage these things know so much better than we poor sailors. But don't you see, sir, it's just like this: the low-lying clouds and fogs

gather on the summits of the downs, often remaining there for hours, when as often as not it is quite fine and clear down below.'

Leaving Birling Gap, we proceeded over the grassy downs towards Beachy Head. Just before we reached that famous height, a grassy dip in the downs tempted us to halt and rest awhile. Here let me for once quote from my note-book. I transcribe below a few paragraphs therein written; for as a sketch done direct from nature possesses certain qualities, and a freshness, however wanting in finish, that a completed picture, gain it ever so much in other respects, never has, so these rough and hasty notes may better convey my impressions than had they been carefully re-written. Naturally the simplest and readiest words were used, there was no time to consider or arrange these; just as an artist endeavouring to secure a transient effect has no time to think of the colour he employs, nor to bother his head about the laws of composition, perspective, or chiaroscuro: what he wants is to transfer to canvas or paper, as the case may be, as quickly and truthfully as he can in the time at his disposal, the scene that is before him. So have I done, using words instead of the brush. The following, then, is a verbatim unrevised copy of my notes, which, being written on the spot, are the genuine expressions of my sentiments and feelings at the time.

Near Beachy Head. I am writing this in a sheltered gorse-surrounded hollow, a little below the renowned headland. I am lying down upon the

smooth sward, so soft it would not hurt a baby's tender foot; the air has a sweet scent of wild thyme and fragrant whiffs of gorse and other blended odours come wafted to me upon the tonic-laden air. It is simply life-giving to breathe this light atmosphere, sea and mountain air combined: it sends the blood quickening through the veins, it is invigorating to a degree, and makes one feel that life is in truth worth living. As I lie down, delighting in laziness, contentedly doing nothing (not always an easy feat for an actively disposed man), I feel that to simply exist is a pleasure supreme. Excitement enough for me to gaze at the deep pure blue overhead, across which large white clouds and smaller cloudlets of ever-changing form are sailing quietly along; and as I watch their gentle motion a feeling of perfect repose comes over me—I am alone with Nature. There is a quietude all around that is most rest-bestowing. Not that these grand downs are given over to an unbroken silence—such as the sense of stillness upon an American prairie, which is not restful but rather oppressive—but the sounds one hears upon them are reposeful ones, and serve but to increase the general sensation of peace. Listening attentively, I can hear now and again the plaintive cry of an unseen gull, the occasional call of a shepherd to his dog, and once or twice has come wafted to me, softened and mellowed by space, the chimes of some far-away clock, doubtless of a church hidden somewhere in that misty blue hollow over yonder; and, most pleasing of all, the continued rhythmic wash, wash, wash, of the restless ocean,

surging against the foot of the mighty cliff upon whose sunny summit I am reclining, as much at ease as though on my own sofa at home.

The wild music of the sea, who can describe it? It rises in a ceaseless harmony—a half-joyous, a half-melancholy refrain, it both delights and saddens me. Who can put words to such music? Somehow, as I listen to it, an indefinable longing for the unknown takes possession of me—a longing for something that is not, a seeking after that which can never be found, a feeling that cannot be put into words. No poem or song ever raises such emotions within me as does the solemn thunder hymn of the never-resting sea.

I have just gathered a handful of the short grass from around me; I have crushed it in my hand—how fragrant it is! I never knew that grass was sweet-scented like this; so I have just examined it carefully. The small handful that I plucked is, I find, composed of many tiny herbs and small plants, the names of which I am totally ignorant; barely half of what I have gathered is grass proper. No wonder the turf is so soft and the wind distils from it such delightful perfumes. No wonder that the Southdown mutton is deemed so excellent; sheep that live upon such a pasturage should yield a tasteful dish. I doubt much whether we always get the genuine article. I have indulged in this mutton, reared and sent as a present by a friend, and it seemed beyond all comparison superior to that generally supplied under the same name. But I am sadly descending from the romantic.

A lark has found me out; he has come, and is singing his entrancing song just over my head,

evidently for my especial gratification. How low he seems; what a little body to possess such a loud voice! How the tiny creature asserts itself! What a minute speck that songster, compared to the breadth of the sky above and the majestic sweeps of the mighty downs around! One of the smallest things of earth, contrasting strangely with the vastness of sky and land, and the immensity of space, impressing the lonely wanderer with the greatness of the insignificantly little! It seems almost, if I were to stand up, I could touch him. I do so; but he only moves his position a few yards, he does not go higher up. Why does he keep so low? This is not the first time I have noticed how near to the ground the larks sometimes keep on the downs, and how defiantly bold and careless of man they appear upon them. There must surely be some reason for this.

I have left my retired nook, and am standing upon the edge of the cliff, looking into space. What a deep blue the sea appears from my vantage height—a deep pure ultramarine, strewn all over as with sparkling diamonds, where the countless waves catch for a moment the sun's rays. And the ships below, either all white or grey, in sunshine or shadow (for the sea here has ships upon it, it is not a sailless ocean), how small and insignificant they look, dwarfed by space—mere toy boats; and yet, if I mistake not, that tiny speck out yonder represents a gigantic liner, homeward bound—a little world afloat. And how far the sea extends; for, owing to my elevated position, the horizon is a high one; just as the

prospect lengthens out when looking down from a height upon a far-stretching country, so I look down upon a world of ocean, and I feel how illimitable it is.

Upon all this glorious prospect of far-spreading sea and swelling uplands the sun shines brightly down, there is no smoke or haze to soften it, the air is purity itself. It has a peculiar quality of clearness, brightness, and sunniness rare to England; rare elsewhere, for aught I know, for I have not discovered breezes so bracing, and withal so balmy, in any foreign land. Up here I feel I am having both a sun and air bath—glorious tonics for the overwrought brain, and best of all restoratives for the jaded town-dweller, a certain cure, besides, for dyspepsia. There is no tonic in the pharmacopœia at all to compare to that of summer days spent tramping across these downs; and how eminently they are suited to the pedestrian or explorer who is enabled to wander upon them in any direction his fancy may dictate! The short springy turf makes walking for its own sake a pleasure, a new experience; one never seems to get tired or footsore on the downs. The turf is perhaps a little slippery in continued dry weather, but otherwise delightful to tread upon—a great contrast to the unyielding pavements of town; then it can be followed anywhere, for there are no bogs, boulders, streams, or precipices to obstruct or hinder the wanderer; he is practically free to go whither he will, up hill and down dale.

Here, within two hours' smooth railway travelling of London, through a pleasant country that makes

the hours seem short, is a famous and extensive playground; and how few take advantage of this fine health-giving land! Truly, visitors at Eastbourne walk or drive up to Beachy Head, because it is one of the things to do, and so they 'do' it accordingly; but the rest of the downs are given up to their own desolation; and, save for occasional shepherds and their flocks, appear as lifeless and deserted as though they were some far-off moors in Northern Britain out of the shooting season. And here my notes come to an end.

Old Inn Sign—'The Half-Moon.'

An Oak of Queen Elizabeth's Time, Hurstmonceaux Park.

CHAPTER X.

A Southdown Shepherd—Shepherding—A Smuggling Dodge—Eastbourne—An Uninteresting Bit of Road—Signboards—Old Inns—Curious Titles—History in a Signpost—Pevensey Castle—Roman Masonry—Local Legends—A Level Land—Country Gentlemen and their Parks—Hurstmonceaux Castle—A Grand Gateway—Vandalism—A Ghostly Drummer—Haunted?—Curious Coincidences—A Lord Hanged for Poaching—Prodigious Pumpkins—A New Way of Distinguishing One's Name.

THE shadows around us were gradually lengthening, the west was growing a pale amber; and as we had yet some distance to travel before we should reach Eastbourne (our night's destination) we felt that it was time to take our departure, for we had no desire to be belated upon those lonely downs. So somewhat reluctantly we proceeded on our way.

At the last crest of the uplands we came upon an old shepherd leading his flock homeward—for his flock was following him, he was not driving them. They were slowly, sleepily, creeping along, stopping now and again to nibble a last mouthful of the sweet herbage.

The low-lying sun was just dipping behind the

purple heights, and a gleam of golden light rested upon him and the tops of the sheep, making them all stand out powerfully against the grey gloom of the shadowed valley, the warmth of the tints being enhanced by the cool, dark, colourless background. It was as though one of Millet's pictures had stepped out of its frame, and we were gazing upon it.

As the shepherd trudged wearily along, little heeding the spreading loveliness around, we asked him what he thought of the weather for the morrow—this as an excuse for a chat, for these shepherds are always ready to talk about the weather, it is their one never-failing topic of conversation. Then from the weather we led him on to other subjects. He had, he said, six hundred sheep, more or less, under his care, he could not say exactly how many, as some stray away and get lost. They used to lose many more when he was a young man; then sheep 'wur oftener stolen than lost,' for when the smugglers flourished in these parts, they would help themselves to one or more occasionally, but that was only when they were hard up; and the farmers knew what they had to put up with, and calculated for such losses accordingly. But the smugglers were not such a bad lot; when they were in luck, and had successfully run in a cargo, a keg or two of spirits somehow found its way to the farmers' cellars, and 'they never had any need to buy tobaccy.' So putting one thing with another, our informant thought they had not much to grumble at, though it was annoying now and then to find a sheep missing 'without ever as much as asking your leave.'

Then we asked about his dog. 'What sort of a dog is he?' 'Well, he's a cross of some sort wi' a Scotch collie; he's not a bad 'un as dogs go, but he's not a patch to his mother. Things these times are not as good as they used to be, leastways so it seems to me,' he remarked pathetically. 'See this crook, it is not half as good as my old 'un, and it cost me twice as much as my fayther paid for his'en; that were a real Pyecombe crook, but they don't make the like now. Look at this, it's not a right shape at all, but her was the best I could get.' 'But,' we said—and by our remark displayed our rueful ignorance of shepherding—'it is only for ornament is it? and it looks well enough.' Whereupon he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise that we should not know better, 'Of course it's for use I want it; do you think I'd carry a thing like this about to look at? Why, how 'ud I get hold of a sheep without a crook?' And as we could not answer the question, he gave us a practical illustration of its use. Stretching suddenly out the long pole, he caught a poor unfortunate sheep with the hooked end, by its hind leg, and thus held it for a time. We observed that the crook was irregular in form, not the neat, gracefully shaped article that artists invariably make such in their paintings.

Then for our special benefit he ordered his dog to collect the sheep together and bring them on to the road. His instructions were given by a series of shouts, but which, though worse than Greek to us, for we could not comprehend a word, were perfectly understood by the despised animal. The

intelligent creature, with a bark of delight at the prospect of a good scamper, set off at once, and, running round and round the sheep in an ever narrowing circle, managed in a short time to get them together into a fairly compact mass; then he drove them on to the roadway as bidden. Upon seeing which, we ventured to remark that it appeared to us the dog was a treasure, and that we thought, however perfect his mother might have been, she could hardly have done more or better. 'Ay, sir, but you don't understand shepherding; he's too eager and fast, he blows the sheep, and it's a bad thing for sheep to get blown—fact is, he's a precious deal too fond of his work.' Here was a new fault to us, and an exceedingly rare one, we should imagine; at any rate, I have never as yet come across the craftsman who was 'too fond of his work.' 'You see, sir,' he continued, 'I can't get on without a dog, but I've to watch that creature as well as the sheep. I can't leave him, or he'd be after 'em, chasing the lot all over the place, and then my master 'ud be at I. He don't know how to keep quiet, that's the worst of him.' 'Perhaps when he grows older he will know better,' we remarked. 'Maybe, sir, but I haven't much hopes of him; but I must have a dog of some sort. You see, we gets over a lot of ground in a week; six hundred sheep eats up a quantity of stuff, and the grass don't grow over fast on these dry downs; so we've to keep on changing our pasturage—always on the move—and there be no hedges or fences to keep the sheep in; and if it weren't for the dog, where should I be? It's not in fine weather we has the trouble,

but in thick rain and mists, which come on sudden like; then, if one is not sharp, the sheep will wander away; and the downs is a big bit of ground to hunt over for 'em, and if you don't get 'em soon they gets miles away—sometimes walks over the cliffs.'

'Are times any better than they used to be?'

'No, sir, I don't think they are, leastway for us poor folk. Not that I'm much better or worse off than I wur when young; but my fayther, who wur a shepherd afore me, he wur a lot better to do. You see, in his time a shepherd could now and again earn a honest penny by helping the smugglers a bit at nights. I've heard my old fayther tell a lot about 'em. Of course he wur on the downs all day, and he used to keep an eye upon the preventive men, and now and again give a helping hand at night; it paid better nor shepherding. Perhaps you may have heard about some holes cut in the cliff under the lighthouse yonder; people do say as how they wur made by some old parson (Parson Darby's Holes they calls 'em) so that shipwrecked sailors might climb up to 'em for safety, but I knows a sight better. Them holes were never made for shipwrecked sailors. I often wonder how towerists believes such silly stories. How could a poor sailor know where they wur? and 'tain't likely ships would wreck 'emselves just opposite where they was. No, sir, I tell 'ee they wur made by the smugglers. My fayther used to tell I about 'em, and as how they wur worked. You see, when it wur high water the preventive men used to come up on to the top of the cliff; so at nights when the tide wur up and the

coast clear, the smugglers used to run their cargy in below, then one man 'ud climb up to the holes, and let down a rope, and so they would haul the things up. Then they left 'em there till another night when the tide was out, when the preventive men watched on the beach, and then the top wur free, so they 'ud haul the casks up. Then the shepherds 'ud sometimes get a job or two a-watching around, or may be giving a helping hand. Yes, them wur good times; I wur born too late, worst luck. Good-night; thank you, sir.' This for a small coin which changed ownership, and which we thought the 'honest' shepherd had well earned. Then, as it had grown dark, we trudged hurriedly backwards a couple of miles or more, for our shepherd's stories were over two miles in length, counting by the distance traversed whilst he related them.

Twilight had given place to a moonless and starless night, before we again reached the last crest of the downs that rise so grandly right above Eastbourne. Standing upon that outstretching height we looked down upon an impenetrable gloom—a land of mystery. It was as though we had come to the end of the world and could no farther go; a mighty void of darkness was before us, an infinity of space. A perfect silence reigned around; the breezes had dropped to rest, even our very voices seemed strangely loud in the windless air; the hushed stillness of the hour depressed us, a profound stillness that made its presence felt. We might have been some lone wanderers upon an unknown, uninhabited world. Around we could just trace the dark outlines

of the looming downs ; all else was hidden in an Egyptian blackness. It is not often thus that one is lifted above the world away from all sounds, the so-called quiet of the country is comparative only ; but the deep quiet here was the quiet of desolation. A feeling of loneliness came upon us, and we were not sorry when, after getting lost more than once, we found ourselves at last in the outskirts of Eastbourne. Here we at any rate were assured of comfortable quarters and a hearty welcome ; for were we not to pay a visit to a friend ? And after our eerie, darksome wanderings, how cheerful seemed that cosy little sitting-room, in which we found all things made ready for us ! In the same way, I am not sure whether one of the great charms of travel is not the fact that when we return it makes us the more appreciate the comforts of our own homes ; for, after all, what a magic meaning there is, to the true-born Briton, in that simple old Saxon word! The French language knows it not, though it has given us *ennui* —a poor exchange in truth. Often a study of the language of a nation is the best clue to its character.

I must be excused from saying anything of Eastbourne : our journey was not undertaken to see well-known places, though of necessity we had from time to time to pass through such ; nor have I the slightest desire to enter into a competition with guide-book writers in this respect. Eastbourne is too familiar to need any description at my hands ; and this excuse must serve me when passing through other places that most people who know anything of their own

land are, or should be, acquainted with. So, good reader, next morning kindly find us comfortably seated in the phaeton once again resuming our pleasant wanderings on wheels.

Out of Eastbourne, by the route we took, the first mile or so was uninteresting to a degree. The road was level as a road could be, dusty and monotonously straight; moreover, to perfect its ugliness, it led us along a 'long drawn out' suburb of mean cottages—an unhappy combination of evil things, contrasting greatly with our pleasant rambles of the preceding day over the soft green hills and winding ways of the little-peopled downs.

The only thing of interest that attracted our attention as we drove along, and by its marked antithesis to the surrounding meanness appeared to us perhaps more worthy of note than it really is, was a modern sign projecting from a coffee-tavern, yclept 'Ye Rising Sun.' The painted design on the board was good, and as artistic as such things well can be, but it was the wrought and twisted iron support that specially pleased us—this was both quaint and original; the function of the material employed has been understood, iron not being made to do duty for wood or stone; altogether it is an excellent specimen of what such things should be, and were in the past, but now so seldom are. It might have been wrought in the Sussex Iron Age, so complete and simple yet full of meaning is it, so adapted to its purpose. This trifle of considered handiwork, how charming it looked to the eye, wearied by the unbeautiful around! How greatly a little thing

of beauty will help to redeem a world of commonplace!

One of the most common and best-preserved relics of the enjoyed and effective handiwork of bygone times is the wrought-iron sign-supports that may still be found by hundreds over all the land. Many an unpretending village hostel possesses something worth inspecting in this way; and as for the one-time flourishing coaching inns, it is a constant source of delight to me to stop and admire their ancient signs.

The landlords of the past prided themselves upon these as well as all else connected with their establishments. Thirty, forty, or even fifty pounds were expended upon them; and with all the many changes that have taken place, these have suffered least of all, as regards the quaintly wrought ironwork, that is; the paintings upon the signboards, daubed and redaubed over by later hands, how pitifully they contrast with their rare settings of cunningly hammered metal! In my sketch entitled 'A Relic of the Old Coaching Days' I have reproduced one of these delightful and interesting signs. Be it remembered, however, this belongs merely to a roadside hostelrie, and does not in any way represent the grand mass of scrolled work that the more important coaching inns almost always possessed.

It may not be in the recollection of all that inn signs are a survival of the old signboards that tradesmen in past times hung in front of their places of business, each having some distinguishing device, and often an added symbol of the wares sold, or the

trade carried on. Perchance, beneath a representation of 'Ye Blue Boar' a hat might be shown, or a barber's pole project, according to the nature of the business done within. So the eye of the uneducated could unaided read these pictorial devices.

But as tradesmen grew more and more competitive, in their attempt to outrival one another their signboards increased so in size as to obstruct both light and air; so much so, indeed, that in the narrow streets of the olden towns they at last became an intolerable nuisance, and powers had eventually to be obtained to have them done away with, more especially as people became better educated and they were less of a necessity. So that now we have over our shops, with but rare exceptions, prosaic names instead of pictorial signs. Still, even in this day a few such signs are employed. In Oxford Street 'The Golden Canister' does duty over an Italian warehouse; a certain print-shop boasts the sign of 'The Rembrandt Head,' and a second-hand bookseller's shop I wot of has a carved and gilt half-moon projecting from it; these and sundry other instances show that this quaint old fashion has not altogether been improved away.

The modern hotel of course is signless; it is only the comfortable old inns of our forefathers that retain such old-world belongings. 'The Red Lion,' 'The King's Head,' 'The Green Dragon,' and so forth—how pleasantly such titles sound, with their flavour of the past; how suggestive of 'taking mine ease at mine inn!' Now we have in their place the Palace, the Grand, the Railway Hotel, and the like, with overabundant show and overlittle comfort.

A RELIC OF 'THE OLD COACHING DAYS.'

ST. GEORGE HANOVER SQUARE
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Driving across country, the signs of the roadside inns were a never-failing source of interest to us. The history of many was apparent, though manifestly changed from their original intention, such as, for instance, the incongruous combination of 'The Sheep and Anchor,' evidently once upon a time, we judged, 'The Ship and Anchor'; again, 'The Cow and Comet' possibly was evolved from 'The Cow and Moon,' of nursery-rhyme renown, the old half-moon under the village painter's hands being converted into the likeness of a comet, and so forth; but others we came across that puzzled us as to their origin. Perhaps the strangest of all we have so far observed is one we noticed upon a previous journey, of which I have already made mention in a former work. It was a representation of two men standing one on either side of a tub, hard at work endeavouring to scrub a negro white, and had beneath it inscribed 'The Labour in Vain.' Then we have seen 'The Headless Man' and 'The Man without a Body,' being a head supported upon two legs only, an odd conceit; 'The Jolly Friar,' dating possibly from the times long ago, when monasteries flourished in the land; this showed a monk—Falstaff in bodily appearance—indulging in a glass of ale—or sack, is it?—with a sly wink. 'Flying Bulls' and 'Flying Dragons' as well have come under our notice, and from beneath the sign of the 'Beehive' we copied the following lines:—

> Within this hive we're all alive,
> Good liquor makes us funny;
> If you are dry, come in and try
> The flavour of our honey.

'The Fives All,' too, is a curious sign; still we have come across it more than once, though with slight variations. The first we saw was at Marlborough, and had painted on it, in order given, the Queen, a bishop, a lawyer, a soldier, and a portly representation of John Bull; and beneath each figure was respectively written, 'I rule for all, I pray for all, I plead for all, I fight for all, and I pay for all.' By way of change, in one place we observed that the place of John Bull was taken by the Devil, and the legend 'I pay for all' was superseded by 'I take all!'

But these quaint old signs, I sadly fear, are growing fewer and fewer year by year. New landlords take the place of old ones. 'What a strange sign!' they exclaim; and having no veneration for the past nor care for old associations, and as they cannot appreciate what they do not understand, they improve it out of existence, and supply its place with some such commonplace title as the 'Dash Arms,' or the 'London Inn,' and the old quaint signboard that has stood for centuries, till it has become prehistoric, vanishes for ever; and to the sorrow of antiquaries yet another relic of the never-returning past is replaced by a prosaic meaningless substitute; but do we not live in a practical present—an age in which common sense has taken the place of old romance?

After a time our road began to pluck up spirit and to mount a little, and at the top of the last rise we came upon a signpost with the inscription, 'To Pevensey, Hastings, and Battle.' That simple signpost set our minds a-wandering away into the

far-off past. What memories it aroused within us! Those three names, how connected they are with English history; what stirring events in our 'rough island's story' they call up!—Pevensey, where, according to Sir G. B. Airy and other excellent authorities, Julius Cæsar landed on both the occasions of his invasion of Britain, B.C. 55 and 54; Hastings and Battle, of a later time, still long centuries ago, when William Duke of Normandy more than a thousand years after came also as a conqueror.

Pevensey Castle is now more attractive to the archæologist and antiquary than to the general traveller, for it has arrived at that state of ruin that is even too ruinous to be picturesque: it is more interesting than beautiful. Here and there in the outer walls we noticed the characteristic herring-bone masonry of the early Roman builders, seemingly, to us, as perfect as the day when first erected. And although it has been exposed to the weathering of nigh upon 2,000 years, the very marks of the masons' trowels upon the cement or mortar are yet plainly to be discerned. Red this mortar is with powdered tiles, that was mixed with it: harder and more enduring than any stone, granite possibly excepted. Verily these Romans knew how to build. What, I wonder, would they think of our nineteenth-century contractors' edifices, barely able to last out a ninety-nine years' ground lease? If such structures had been done in their time, they would have made short work with the contractor. Governments had in those days a very inhumane but very effectual way of dealing with roguery. At one period incendiary

fires became so prevalent in Japan that a grim law was laid down 'that the owner of any house burnt down should be beheaded, after which,' the historian naïvely states, 'there were very few fires in the country.' Inside the ancient outer walls of Pevensey are the remains of a feudal castle, the stone-work of which, though strong and substantial, looks somewhat crude beside the careful building of the earlier Romans.

Proceeding on our way, we presently passed in the little village an old timbered house with the date 1542 upon it. Pulling up to inspect this, we inquired of an intelligent-looking lad, who was standing close by, if he knew anything about it. This we did on the principle that nothing is lost by asking, but we were hardly prepared for the astonishing information that was vouchsafed to us. 'Yes, it's an old 'un,' we were told; 'Queen Elizabeth once stayed there.' Now we had no knowledge that the sovereign mentioned had ever been to Pevensey; if she did visit this remote corner of her kingdom, the house we were looking at would hardly have afforded shelter to her, for it was a mere cottage. But we had learnt from much wandering in out-of-the-way spots never to express our surprise at the curious 'facts' that were constantly being revealed to us. The number of castles destroyed by Cromwell's inexhaustible cannon-balls, the numerous houses Queen Elizabeth slept in, we have at various times come across, are more than I can remember; nor can I enumerate the many rooms we have seen in which Cardinal Wolsey is said to have passed the

night. Indeed, it may be almost taken for granted when viewing an old castle, should there chance to be a guide attached, that he will relate for your benefit the old familiar story of its being held by the Royalists, besieged and captured by Cromwell, and dismantled by his orders; and if you are inspecting an old timbered house of any interest, it is an even chance you are informed that good Queen Bess once stopped there during one of her numerous progresses. Old panelled rooms in like manner (according to our experiences) are frequently connected in some mysterious way with the before-mentioned famous cardinal.

From Pevensey we traversed a long stretch of flat land—a little Holland, with miniature dykes which served the purpose of fences—a low-lying, far-extending marshy level, a sea of waving grasses, lank and long, over which the unrestrained winds swept, causing waves upon the land as well as on the distant sea. A great skyscape overhead, a wild warm wind blowing from the south, a sense of freedom and boundless space around: these were the principal features of our prospect. The only sounds that came to us were the measured monotonous wash, wash, of the incoming tide, and the melancholy cry of wheeling gulls that seem quite at home in this marshy desert.

Some miles of this flat ague-suggesting country, then we came to the hills once more, and we greeted them as old familiar friends. I am afraid I should make a very bad Dutchman, for I can never be more than a few hours in a flat country without a restless

desire to get out of it coming upon me, a longing to take the very next train to somewhere, no matter where to, so that it takes me away as speedily as possible. Such a country is a fit one to pass through by an express, and under such circumstances railway travelling seems to me altogether good. Still it should be remembered that level lands, owing to their low horizon, possess grand open skyscapes, but one cannot always be staring upwards.

As if to make up for our temporary absence from them, the first hill we encountered showed us its quality by giving our horses a bit of stiff collar work. Then the scenery suddenly changed, our road led us into the heart of a well-wooded undulating country, abounding in leafy lanes, that made us wish to go a dozen ways at once—a great contrast all this to the wild, wind-swept, marshy flat. Picturesque homes and pleasant farmsteads once again began to make their appearance, and so we drove on till we came to a gate which led through a fine old park to the ruined castle of Hurstmonceaux.

Here perhaps I may be allowed a short digression to remark that during our wanderings over England we have noticed with much pleasure (with few exceptions) the generosity of the country gentlemen in allowing the public access to their parks and grounds; even, not unfrequently, when they are of interest, under certain necessary restrictions, into their very homes; often we have observed that the villagers' cricket-ground has been practically given to them by some resident landowner; in other cases a corner of his park has been placed at their disposal. Seldom have

we come to a fine park and, upon asking if we might be allowed to walk in it, had our request refused; sometimes indeed we have been asked to keep to the roads or paths, but rarely has even this reasonable restriction been placed upon us. I only mention this fact as I have heard certain landlords called churlish land-grabbers, and I know not what else, simply because, acting well within their rights, they have chosen to keep their grounds private. It seems hardly fair or generous to complain thus. A country gentleman has surely a right to enjoy his own property in peace if it so please him, without making it free to all comers who may choose to demand admission. I do not see how the public can expect to be provided with pleasure-grounds at private parties' expense.

A grand old pile is Hurstmonceaux Castle, built all of brick, the only castle so constructed that we have seen, and undoubtedly one of the most picturesque ruins in Britain. Brick hardly seems the proper material for a stern stronghold; but here age has given a grey hue to the ancient walls, so that the fact of their not being of stone is scarcely observable. The gateway entrance is very impressive,[1] flanked as it is by two massive octagonal towers, rounded at the top, and surmounted by watch turrets: an original and telling bit of architecture, picturesque as well as impressive, with its time-worn appearance, mellow-toned and weather-tinted walls, its broken battlements, and its ivy-tangled doorway. Still may be observed the long slits on either side of the portcullis

[1] See Frontispiece.

which received the chains of the drawbridge. Impressive all this, but no longer warlike or to be dreaded, for Time's

> gradual touch
> Has moulded into beauty many a tower
> Which, when it frowned with all its battlements,
> Was only terrible.

As we stood before this grand old gateway and guarding towers, with their crossbow loopholes, so eloquent of the feudal past, we fell into a delightful daydream, and we pictured in our mind what the castle must have looked like when in the prime of its glory. But our dream did not last long. An obtrusive notice-board over the entrance caught our eye against our will; upon this we perceived the following unromantic inscription: 'Notice.—Admission 6*d.* each; teas provided, 9*d.* a person.' The reading of this most effectually took all the poetry out of us. Poor old castle! what an indignity to be turned into a tea-garden and picnic-ground, with swings and tables set around! It is enough to make the erst proud owners turn in their graves.

We paid our sixpence and entered. A mere shell now this once lordly stronghold; of it little but the outer walls now remain. The internal space is all grass-grown, and only a few ivy-covered buttresses and the bases of crumbling piers are left to mark where the different courts, apartments, and kitchens have been. Indeed, so completely has the place been gutted that it is impossible without a guide to form any idea as to its original ground-plan. Yet Walpole, who visited it as recently as 1752, wrote:

'Built in the reign of Henry VI., it is as perfect as ever;' and states, moreover, that the drawbridge was then existing. Some years later, according to Grose, it was still in the same excellent state of preservation.

It was the hand of man, not that of Time, that ruined this stately pile. Wyatt, the architect and great destroyer, he who was let loose upon Salisbury Cathedral, and wrought such havoc there, was also allowed to do what he would with Hurstmonceaux. Can it be credited that he literally stripped the fine old building solely that he might employ the materials in the erection of a brand-new house upon another spot for his employer? What vandalism; and what a contrast between the meaningless structure of Wyatt's and the graceful grandeur of the magnificent edifice he so lightheartedly destroyed!

In one of the entrance towers used to exist a haunted chamber called 'The Drummer's Room,' from which at night the sound of a drum was often heard—so at least says tradition. The whole story, with minute details, may yet be gathered from a few of the older natives of the place, varying slightly, however, in the mouths of the different relaters. Numerous reasons have been suggested to account for the mystery of the ghostly drummer. Some say it was a signal for smugglers; others that it had something to do with the meeting of certain lovers, who had enlisted a friendly gardener into their service; others still that it was a dodge of the smugglers to gain for Hurstmonceaux Castle the reputation of being haunted, trusting by such means to frighten anybody from

going there at night, and thus at that time to make use of the rambling old pile in which to hide away their goods; but no one appears to have dreamt of suggesting that possibly the whole story of the drum was the outcome of a silly invention. Still, it does not do to be too sceptical in this world, for does not Shakespeare say—

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy?

But for all, till I have actually beheld a real ghost I shall look to earthly explanations for mysterious noises. A rather strange thing did, however, happen to a friend of mine. One Christmas he went on a visit to an old house, where he had not been before, all the rooms but one being occupied. He was placed in a chamber that bore the reputation of being haunted; nor did his host, who had recently come into the property, think anything of the matter. Next morning, however, my friend complained of being disturbed all night by continuous noises (rats?); so much so that he refused to sleep there again, and as there was no other room available for him, at some inconvenience to himself he returned to town next day rather than do so. I may add that my friend had no knowledge till the following morning, when he made his complaints, that the chamber he had occupied was supposed to be haunted. My only experience in this line was while staying, like my friend, at a country house on a first visit—a house in the grounds of which, according to local tradition, on dark moonless nights a headless ghost

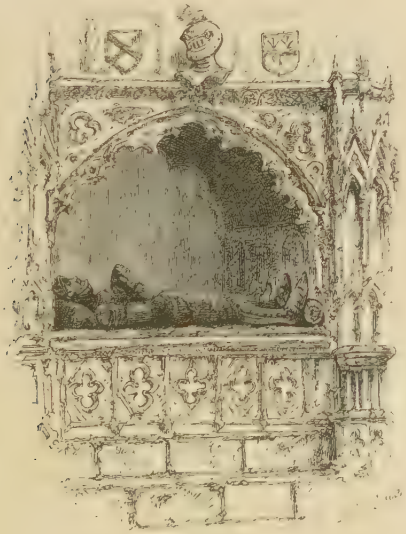
promenades in an aimless fashion, unless his object be to frighten children away at those hours, which minor point he certainly attains. But at the time of my visit I knew nothing whatever of this. However, that night, singularly enough, I did dream—perhaps the old-fashioned room and ancient furniture, including a massive 'four-poster,' had a great deal to do with the matter; still, as a fact, I did dream that a ghost paid me a visit—a very peculiar ghost, in truth, walking into the room with nothing where his head should be—and that he exclaimed (how he managed to speak without a mouth is a puzzling point; but spectres are beyond all ordinary rules), 'I'm the family ghost—the little old man without a head!' A most singular coincidence, certainly, yet nothing more, and merely proving that as such strange coincidences are possible they will sometimes occur. Indeed, it is a wonder that they do not happen more frequently. Out of the hundreds of dreams that have disturbed my slumbers, this is the only one that has any curious incident connected with it. Needless to say that neither my good host nor any member of his family had ever beheld the ghost in question; and as the village folk, who most firmly believe in him, will never after night-fall go near the spot of his supposed wanderings, I do not presume anybody ever will, though none the less do they believe in the unseen. But enough: the spectral drummer of Hurstmonceaux still awaits a reasonable explanation, for it seems to me most absurd that either lovers or smugglers should proclaim their proceedings by drum, as the preventive

men, whatever the unsophisticated villagers might dread, had no respect for ghosts, and the mere fact of such an extensive ruin, with handy dungeons and convenient hiding nooks, being so near the sea, would suggest their keeping a careful and constant watch upon the place.

A former owner of Hurstmonceaux, the third Lord Dacre, came to an untimely end; being persuaded to make up one of a poaching party, which was to go after the deer in the park of a neighbour. During the course of the expedition an encounter took place between the poachers and some keepers, which resulted in the death of one of the latter. Called to account for this, Lord Dacre and his companions were tried, condemned, and executed at Tyburn. Which tragic event proves, according to some people, that justice was impartially administered in England, even in those remote times; and, according to others, proves simply the very reverse, for they say that there was no evidence to show that Lord Dacre struck the actual fatal blow, and maintain therefore that he was rather sacrificed owing to the jealousy of some parties at court, and that the unfortunate termination of the poaching fray gave his enemies the opportunity and excuse of getting rid of him.

Rambling into the gardens of the place, we found these still cultivated, though somewhat neglected and weed-grown. Here we came across some of the largest pumpkins we had ever seen. Whilst we were inspecting these, a man belonging to the place came up. He told us that one he pointed out would

weigh upwards of eighty pounds. 'They grows big here,' he added, 'but the visitors spoils 'em all, a-cutting their names upon 'em. We cannot be a-watching about the whole day.' We could not help wondering from what he had said whether our informant had not come to watch us. Then, after some further conversation, he remarked, 'I don't believe as how some people would be happy in heaven if they hadn't something to cut their names on there.'



Lord Dacre's Tomb.

A Country Road

CHAPTER XI.

Hurstmonceaux Church—A Fine Altar Tomb—The Origin of the Title of the Lords Dacre—An Ancient Brass—A Puzzling Inscription—Primitive Doormats—Cottagers' Pride in their Homes—Old English Forests—Sussex Skies and Scenery—'Carrying Coals to Newcastle'—A 'God's Providence' House—The Minor Objects of the Road—Normanhurst—English Native Architecture—A Modern Builder in an Old House—Classic Ground—A Grand Seascape—Past Events—Battle Abbey—The Norman Invasion—A Strange Omission—The Great Age of Sussex Men—One Hundred and Twenty Years Old.

A PLEASANT walk up the green slope of a hill led us from Hurstmonceaux Castle to Hurstmonceaux Church. This latter is situated far from the rectory, and has only a few scattered houses near it. Where the congregation comes from may well puzzle a stranger, but Sussex people often walk long miles to a place of worship.

From the churchyard here is a glorious view extending over a vast tract of country, bounded by the bold outline of the distant downs, whose swelling summits terminate grandly and fitly at the far-famed Beachy Head. We could not help observing during

our journey through Sussex how the churches of that county are generally either so situated on a height as to afford splendid prospects all around, or else, by curious contrast, are placed deep down in a hollow, with no view whatever.

The exterior of Hurstmonceaux Church is as picturesque as its interior is interesting. In it we noticed a stately altar-tomb to Lord Dacre, the second of that title, deceased in 1534, and to his son, Sir Thomas Dacre, who died before his father. Beneath a richly carved and fretted canopy of stone their two recumbent figures are reproduced in armour, with hands crossed in the attitude of prayer, their feet resting on a crouching wolf-dog, the crest of the family. This emblem is also cut in stone above the gateway of the castle, where it holds a banneret with three lions rampant thereon. We stood long before this grey and time-worn memorial of a great and once warlike family: it seemed to overpower the simple church and claim all attention for itself. There in the hollow below stands in ruined desolation the once proud castle of the Dacres. The place now knows their name no more; its open courts are bare to wind and weather; its ragged crumbling walls have become the home of countless bats and screeching owls. 'So passes away the glory of the world.'

This noble and illustrious family is said to have derived its title from the gallant deeds of a member who fought under Richard Cœur de Lion in the Holy Land. It was at the siege of Acre this ancestor so distinguished himself; hence Lord

D'Acre, anglicised to Dacre. Scott, no mean authority upon such matters, alludes to this in 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' In canto iv. verse 17 he makes his minstrel say—

> To back and guard the archer band
> Lord Dacre's bill-men were at hand,
> A hardy race, on Irthing bred,
> With kirtles white, and crosses red,
> Array'd beneath the banner tall,
> That stream'd o'er Acre's conquered wall.

And again, in the same canto, verse 29—

> fierce Dacre cried,
> 'For soon yon crest, my father's pride,
> That swept the shores of Judah's sea,
> And waved in gales of Galilee,' &c.

On the pavement of the church is a fine brass to Sir William Fienles, if we read the ancient inscription aright. Around its margin runs the following inscription, in quaint Norman French, the vacant spaces representing words that are now illegible :—

> William fienles, Chevaler qy. morast le vxiij. Jour de Janeuer, l'an del incarncon n're . . . . Jheu Cryst, Mile ccccij. gist ycy . . . . qy pur sa Alme devostement Pater Noster et Ave priera vjxx jours de pardon enauera.

The curious old French is not so difficult to translate, and the wanting words may be supplied, from experience of similar inscriptions; but the dates are not so readily to be comprehended, and after puzzling our brains over these we gave them up. What, for instance, does 'vxiij' mean? We guessed eighteen; but we did not feel at all sure

about our guess. Again, how many is 'vjxx jours'? Why should these letters run so eccentrically, when the year of the good knight's death is so plainly written, 'Mile ccccij'? A tomb problem.

Once more returning to the churchyard, we made our way to the venerable yew-tree beneath whose gloomy shadow sleeps Julius Hare, for twenty-two years rector of the parish, and who had John Sterling for his first curate. Hurstmonceaux may justly be proud of the two honoured and household names of Hare and Sterling. Those of my readers who would know more of Hurstmonceaux I would refer to Augustus J. C. Hare's 'Memorials of a Quiet Life,' which work contains amongst other matter many interesting facts about the place and neighbourhood.

It would be difficult to find even in all fair England a more beautiful drive than that from Hurstmonceaux to Battle. The country between the two places abounds in loveliness; the series of landscapes revealed to the fortunate traveller who may chance to journey that way are as varied as they are attractive to the eye, and ever and anon peeps of the distant sea come upon him by way of pleasant surprises—a delightful blending of the rural and marine.

Our way led us past more than one ancient home half drowned in a wealth of greenery; by quaint old farmsteads, pictures in building, the very poetry of rural life; past many a picturesque cottage, nearly all of which had by their doorways wood fagots raised on end, supported by a stick in the centre,

so that whoever enters may wipe his feet before treading upon the well-scrubbed floors. This arrangement appears to be quite common in Sussex, but we have not noticed it elsewhere in England. It is certainly pleasing to observe this evidence of the pride the cottagers take in their humble dwellings. On the other hand, we must confess, the Sussex rustic folk do not seem to possess that love for flowers so common amongst most of the English poor.

As we proceeded on our pleasant stage grand panoramic views ever and again opened up, looking towards the north. In this part of the country wood is everywhere; the forest-like character of the land is still, to a great extent, preserved; and so our eyes ranged over a vast woodscape, green and gold where lighted up by the soft sunshine, fading away to a tender blue in the dim distance.

These Sussex forests used in times past to supply the shipbuilding yards of the navy with some of their finest oak, besides having to provide the local iron-smelting furnaces with all their fuel; and, considering these combined and long-continued demands upon them, it is a wonder they have not long since altogether disappeared. An indirect proof of the thickly wooded nature of the county in former times, as well as to a lesser extent the present, is the number of half-timbered buildings with which it still abounds. Though many of these have been pulled down, those that remain plainly prove, by the lavish use of solid oak in the great beams, massive framing, roof-trees, and so forth, even in cottages and

inconsiderable houses, that in this portion of England oak was cheap and common enough, less expensive than ordinary stone or brick, otherwise it would not have been used in their place, and, above all, so extravagantly.

Not only was the scenery we passed through beautiful in itself, but an exquisite harmony of varying colours pervaded all. What a changefulness, a contrast, and a blending of tints were spread around us, from the glowing whiteness of the clouds, the silvery gleaming of the far-off sea, to the rich red stems of Scotch firs in the foreground and dark full greens of the nearer trees. The old timbered cottages, also, were a study of colour in themselves, weathered into countless hues, as they were, with their red-tiled roofs positively aglow with the gold and silver of lichens; and as a foil to all this wealth of colouring, the outstretched arms of the roadside windmills (of which we passed several) told almost black against the luminous sunlit sky. The clearness and brightness of the southern atmosphere, free from the smoke of large manufacturing towns and swept by the constant ocean breezes, may have something to do with the wealth of colouring of a Sussex landscape; this I cannot say: I only know that it exists, though, as far as I am aware, no writer has made mention of the fact. Julius Hare, however, 'speaks of the deep blue of the Sussex sky; which, when compared with that in more northerly parts of England, has almost an Italian character.'

At one cottage by the roadside we observed that the owner had so trained and clipped a creeper

on the wall that it read 'Praise the Lord'; in the garden of another we came upon two men filling a well with water from casks in a cart. As it struck us that this 'carrying coals to Newcastle' was a curious sort of proceeding, we pulled up to make inquiries as to the object of doing this. The well appeared to be an old one, and the weather had not of late been particularly dry, so we were naturally surprised at the rare sight. 'Anything the matter with the well?' we exclaimed. 'We always thought that water was got from wells, not put into them.' To which we received the somewhat curt reply, 'Perhaps you comes from London town?' We acknowledged the fact. 'Ah! I thought so; you Londoners are mighty clever fellows, thinks as how you knows everything; now, you sees you don't.' And as the man did not seem inclined to be civil, we proceeded on our way without solving the mystery.

Our road that day was simply a series of pictures all the way. One spot especially pleased us, a woodland glade on the top of a rise, abounding in dwarf oaks and yellow waving bracken. Here we called a halt, and treated the horses with a few mouthfuls of freshly plucked grass. A little farther on we came to an old three-gabled farmhouse, with the following inscriptions in quaint letters running right across the ancient homestead, a line to each story :—

Gods . Providence . is . My . Inheritance.

. . . . . .

Except the LORD Bvild the House TH
ey Labovr in Vain that build it.

. . . . . .

Here we Have — 1659 — No Abidince.

A picturesque bit of old-world building it was, and we lingered long gazing at its time-toned walls. So did it attract us that it was some time before we observed the glorious prospect that was spread out before us from the other side of the road. We looked down upon miles on miles of sunny greenery, of woods and cornfields and meadows, with scattered farmsteads every here and there, just where an artist would have placed them had he been painting the picture.

The minor objects we came across by the road-side were a never-failing source of interest and pleasure to us—the different windmills, how they varied from each other ; the grey old village churches, histories in stone ; the curious cottages, with their projecting upper stories ; the rural hostels, with their twisted iron rods and strange signboards depending therefrom ; the conical oast-houses, a quaint gable or chimney-stack, a carved doorway to a poor dwelling that told of fallen fortunes—all afforded us something to think about. Here we observed a flourishing vine trained right over the low roof of a cottage, in the tiny garden of which was an old sundial ; there we noticed an arched well by the side of the way ; again, there would be a letter-box nailed to a tree—primitive in the extreme, that rustic pillar-post ; and so the lesser objects of our way, as well as the greater, ever gave us food for meditation or matter for conversation.

Shortly after leaving the old farmhouse, with its pious inscriptions, the road descended suddenly and steeply through a deep dell with interlacing trees

above, through the countless leaves and meshes of interwoven branches of which the sun formed trembling patterns of green and gold upon our way. The high banks on either side were a sight to behold : covered, these, with a profusion of wildflowers, a bit of natural mosaic. We Englishmen hardly appreciate as we should the wonderful wealth and variety of our wildflowers, their delicate tints, and their unobtrusive beauty. John Burroughs, the American author, concludes an article upon his first visit to Britain with the remark, 'England is, indeed, a flowery land.' It is a good thing sometimes, in more ways than one, 'to see ourselves as others see us.' It is well not to be forgetful of the unheeded loveliness of little things; it is the sum of these trifles that goes to make up the quiet eye-delighting beauty of our land.

Next we came to Catsfield Green. Passing an old smithy we caught to the right a glimpse of the grey village church tower peeping picturesquely out from the midst of surrounding foliage ; and to the left we had a good view of Normanhurst, the stately home of Lord Brassey. Somehow, to us Normanhurst struck a chord out of harmony with the scene : it looked new both in itself and its style of architecture—a great contrast with the charming old Sussex homes, Elizabethan timbered houses, moated granges, Tudor mansions, mellowed and beautified by age, it had been our good fortune to come across of late. To us Normanhurst had a foreign look, it did not seem like a native of the soil.

After all, there is no architecture so suitable to the soft greenery of the English landscape, and the gentle sunshine of its unjustly abused climate, as the Elizabethan and Tudor styles, original as they are, and genuinely English. What a picture an artist can make of these! for they are always pleasing features in themselves, as well as in the landscape, with their many gables, clustering chimneys, high-pitched roofs, mullioned many-paned windows, turrets, and quaint conceits. Unlike classic buildings, they are not ashamed of roof or chimney; they acknowledge rain and snow, the necessity of fires, and make a beauty of the obligation. They are essentially the homes of the English people, from prince to peasant—witness Hatfield House, Speke Hall, and many others for grandeur, almost any moated manor or farmhouse for substantial comfort; and for lowliness without meanness take an old English cottage of the period, for even a cottage may be grandly built. Let it be understood, I am speaking of old English architecture, by which I do not mean the article of modern build and design that goes by the same name—the only thing they have in common is their title. Why, every 'jerry' builder nowadays calls his gingerbread villa with stuck-on plaster ornaments, 'This Desirable Residence in the Old English style.'

I have often longed to take one of these modern speculative builders over an old farmhouse, and to show him the thick walls, the mighty beams, and solid substance of it, fitted to stand the wear and

tear of years—it may be centuries—without repair, and to ask him what he thought of it, and whether he did not consider himself an impostor.

Well, once I did have that questionable pleasure, and the only answer I could get to my queries was, 'I calls it a scandalous waste of good material a building like this; why, I could make three houses of the stuff used in this one.' A statement I quite credited. 'But do you think,' I ventured to remark, 'your new houses would be quite as pleasant to live in as these old ones?' 'I don't know about that,' he replied; 'I builds houses for others to live in.' To me there was a deep hidden meaning in that simple sentence. 'You see,' he went on, 'these old fellows made their houses as though people lived for ever; well, now, if a house lasts a man his life, what more can he want? People are always a-changing their homes nowadays; no, sir, I builds my houses cheap and convenient, and the man I sells them to, likely enough he sells them again; no, sir, we're not rooted to one spot these times; if I was to build like this, a man could not afford more than one home in a lifetime.' And perhaps, after all, according to his lights, our modern builder was right; for railways have made the present generation a restless one, it takes root nowhere; and how can a man care for a merely temporary home, or take that same interest in it, as for one his fathers possessed before, and perchance his children may after him. So it is: we build for a lifetime now—our forefathers for generations.

Now our road led us through a wooded land,

and then we gradually rose and rose till we reached a height which afforded us a vast prospect of hill and valley, of forest and circling sea. We were upon classic ground, close by the spot where was fought the most eventful battle that has ever taken place on English soil. Here we trespassed into an inviting meadow, all gold and silver with buttercups and daisies, in order to secure a better and uninterrupted view. How peaceful and silent was all around! A deep tranquillity prevailed, broken only by the song of birds. One could hardly realise that the very ground we trod upon was the scene of that bloody conflict; that all day long those many centuries ago the air resounded with the loud cries of the 'Dieu aide!' of the invading Normans, and the 'Out, out, Holy Rood, God Almighty!' of the fiercely fighting and hardly pressed Saxons.

But to return to ourselves. I know not when we have come across a more beautiful prospect than the one we gazed upon from that fair, green, and flower-decked meadow. On the horizon, far away to the right of us, was Beachy Head, dimly outlined against the summer sky; to the left the cliffs of Hastings; joined together these by the long line of the gleaming sea. Between the two famous headlands, standing like sentinels on either hand, was spread out a circle of flat shore, dotted with martello towers, looking from our vantage height for all the world like rows of thimbles stood on end—not a happy comparison, but I cannot think of a better—and, to complete the panorama, below us was a mass of waving, many-tinted woods. Hill

and rock, sea and forest, combined to form an enchanting whole.

The only building besides the martello towers we could see from our position was a large stone barn with the conical tops of four oast-houses at each end of it, supported upon an equal number of round structures. These caused the edifice, from our standpoint, to resemble an old French *château*; indeed, had it been across the water we should have certainly mistaken it for one. That solitary building and the martello towers away, we looked down upon much the same scene as the Saxons, under Harold, and their conquerors must have done on that momentous day. We could trace every portion of the ground traversed by William of Normandy, from his landing-place at Pevensey to the fiercely contested battle-ground on the heights beside us. There in that grand bay, stretching from Pevensey to Hastings, he landed with his six hundred ships. A wonderful sight it must have been to see all these in stately order coming in, with the flashing of their innumerable oars sweeping the waters from their sides, making their way slowly and surely to the shore. What a gathering of knights, horsemen, and foot soldiers along that long reach of beach! What a glorious, though unwelcome, spectacle it must have been to the Saxons that happened to be near the coast, with the sun shining on bright helmets, armour, arms, and shields! As we saw the land, so must those warlike Normans—the two outstanding headlands were the same then as now. Yonder, above Hastings, are—

the heights
Where the Norman encamped him of old,
With his bowmen and knights,
And his banner all burnished with gold.

Over hauberk and helm,
As the sun's setting splendour was thrown,
Hence they looked o'er a realm,
And to-morrow beheld it their own.

So, too, must Cæsar have beheld those headlands over a thousand years before. Then our memories took us to a later time, still long ago, when the signal fire blazed out in the darkness of the night upon that lonely height and told that the invincible Armada was in sight—

High on St. Michael's Mount it shone, it shone on Beachy Head.

But this would-be invasion came to a different ending. In a mind-picture we saw the tall Spaniards sorely pressed by the 'dogs of Devon,' who were following close upon their heels, cutting out first one and then another of the stately galleons. How gallantly the little English ships were handled! Those reckless dare-devil 'dogs of Devon' were in their glory; fighting was their trade and pastime, and they soon let the proud Spaniard know that their bite was worse than their bark. Those sturdy old Englishmen did not do much talking, as is now the fashion—they acted. With them it was not even 'a word and a blow': they hit hard, and let others do the babbling; nor reckoned they the odds that might be arrayed against them, for—

The old sea-rover would not run
So long as he had man or gun ;
But he could die when all was done.

Well does Tennyson express the dauntless spirit that was within them when he makes the fearless Sir Richard Grenville exclaim, just before that ever-memorable engagement in which, single-handed, with his little ship, the 'Revenge,' and a crew of barely a hundred men, he fought 'three-and-fifty' Spanish sail for twenty-four long hours—

We be all good English men,
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turned my back upon Don or devil yet.

But enough of these wandering thoughts ; Roman and Norman, Saxon and Spaniard have long since gone to their rest. Friend and foe, warriors on land or sea, steel-clad knight and nameless soldier—brave men all—they have gone to common dust ages ago : dead, but not forgotten, for their deeds will never die.

Battle Abbey stands upon a high eminence, and is visible the country round. Surely no spot on British land is more classic than this, or of deeper interest to an Englishman. Within the convent's ruined walls, exactly where stood the high altar (the site of which is pointed out), Harold of old raised his standard, and, fighting desperately to the last, there he himself fell. By the entrance gateway we observed an old half-timbered building, converted now into cottages, but which was once a guest-house for pilgrims—a picturesque bit of building, but hardly ever noticed by the modern pilgrim, overpowered

and overshadowed as it is by the massive gateway of the monastery.

This is the only abbey, as far as my memory serves, I have seen in England situated thus upon a height away from all water. The monks of old invariably selected some secluded valley in which to build their religious houses, near to a stream or river. The departure from this rule in the case of Battle Abbey is to be accounted for in this wise. William of Normandy vowed, should he be victorious, that upon the place of battle he would raise a magnificent monastery 'for the salvation of all, and especially for those that fall.' After the victory, when the foundations of the structure were being laid, the monks objected to the site on account of the want of water, and also because of the bleak and exposed situation. But the Duke would hear of none other. 'I vowed,' he said, 'to build an abbey upon the very spot where I won my land, and stand here it shall. Keep my oath I will. So build on, good workmen. Fear not, for if God grant me life, wine shall flow more freely for the monks of Battle than clear water does in any other convent within the whole of Christendom.' And so the abbey was built and the altar of it raised upon the very spot where the English king so gallantly fought for his kingdom.

Let us take a glance back at this great struggle, fraught with such important consequences, for it serves to prove how small trifles order mighty events, and how history after all is but a chapter of accidents. Had the French come off victorious (as a number of people at the time thought they would)

in their conflict with Germany, I wonder whether Prince Bismarck would be esteemed the great statesman he is to-day. So, but for fortuitous circumstances, the Norman name might not be much considered now.

Harold had chosen his position well, and had entrenched it with great skill. It covered the only available pass inland, bounded as it was on one side by the Pevensey marshes (at that period a mere morass), and on the other by the trackless forest of Anderida. The post was naturally a strong one, and the uneven brush-covered slopes of the steep hill were a formidable obstacle to the cavalry, upon which the Normans mostly relied. Had the English only remained on the defensive behind their entrenchments and stockades, all would probably have gone well with them, for, according to that eminent historian, Mr. E. A. Freeman, 'the fight began by a charge of the Norman infantry against the stockade. For long they strove in vain to break it; attack after attack failed, still the English troops stood firm, still their ranks dealt death to all who came within range of javelin or stroke of axe. At last the assailants began to waver, and the Breton troops on the left retreated in confusion. The undisciplined troops of the English right, contrary to Harold's express orders, rushed forth from their entrenchments on the foe. . . . The English paid dearly for their rash onslaught; their foes turned upon them in the open, where better arms and better discipline at once prevailed.' But even then the victory was not won; and had it

not been that a chance arrow, at a critical stage in the conflict, pierced Harold's eye, the result, in spite of the impetuous rashness of the English, might have been otherwise than it was. From all of which we may gather upon how little hung the balance of victory. Had the defenders never left their trenches the Normans, as in the first onset, would have probably been hurled back from each fresh attack, in ever-decreasing numbers. Unable to make any impression upon the English entrenchments, defeated and dispirited, with their ships destroyed and retreat impossible, the invaders would have had to submit to the tender mercies of their enemies or to be starved on the plains of Pevensey ; and where would have been the glory of the Norman name ?

Again to quote Mr. Freeman, to show how stubbornly the English fought that day : 'Even when Harold had fallen, resistance did not at once cease. As long as there was a ray of light in the heavens, as long as an English arm had strength to lift axe or javelin, the personal following of King Harold continued the unequal strife. Quarter was neither given nor asked ; not a man of the *comitatus* fled ; not a man was taken captive.' Does this not go far to prove the truth of the exclamation uttered by a baffled enemy, 'These Englishmen do not know when they are beaten' ? Had Harold not fallen as he did, or had there been another leader to take his place, the defeated but not beaten Englishmen might even at the ninth hour have given a good account of themselves to their Norman foes,

and perchance made William of Normandy rue the day he landed upon English soil. But there is no profit in discussing what might have been if things had happened differently.

After inspecting the abbey, our next pilgrimage was to the church, an interesting old building possessing some fine monuments and one or two ancient brasses, with effigies in armour thereon, the earliest of which bears date 1426. An altar tomb in marble to the memory of the 'Ryght Honovrable Sir Anthony Browne. Kngt. of the Gartere' is especially worthy of inspection, though much mutilated. This gallant knight is represented clad in a complete suit of armour. Strangely enough, though the date of his wife's death is given in 1540, the space reserved for his own is still vacant. It was the custom in those times, when a husband erected a monument to his wife, to insert his name thereon as well as that of his former spouse, with suitable inscription, leaving of course the date of his decease to be filled in hereafter. On more than one occasion (a notable instance of this came under our observation in Hereford Cathedral) the faithless knight has married again, and has been laid to rest by the side of his second love, and so the blank has never been filled in. Whether a similar reason was the cause of the strange omission in this case I cannot say; but it is curious that the gallant warrior should have his effigy here, and that the important minor detail as to the date of his death should have failed to have been inscribed upon his tomb.

Walking round the old churchyard, glancing at

the gravestones, we came upon one recording the death of a certain

ISAAC INGALL

Who lived in the Webster family at Battle
Abbey, Sussex, where he had been a
Domestic servant upwards of 90 Years.
Died April 2nd. 1798. Aged 120 Years.

If this stone told the truth, this man must have lived to a truly patriarchal age. Judging from the churchyard inscriptions, it would appear that Sussex men are a long-lived race. During our journey we noticed in a local paper a paragraph announcing the decease of one Richard (nicknamed 'Bodle') Holmes, who is stated, upon apparently good authority, to have died at Heathfield in May 1886, 'having just completed his 107th year.'

A Rural Footpath

The End of the Day

CHAPTER XII.

A Trap Door—Signposts—A Veritable Arcadia—Scenery in Pictures—Robertsbridge—A Strange Source for a River—Country Sermons—A Poacher's Paradise—A Useless Sign—Rural Stupidity—A Landmark—Bodiam Castle—A perfectly Picturesque Ruin—A Novel Method of Defence—Sussex Railways—A Happy Land for Antiquaries and Archæologists—Three Interesting Castles—Hills considered as 'Obstructing the View'!—'A Great Damper of Curiosity'—A Chat with an Architect—Hints from the Past.

The coffee-room door of our inn at Battle had a sort of peephole cut in it, which was covered by a sliding hatch. We had not observed this arrangement in any hotel before, and, though it may be convenient, we much disliked it, for we found that the waiter came every now and again and had a look at us through it during our lunch. We felt as though we were being watched, and were annoyed accordingly. We found upon questioning him afterwards that the waiter only came to see how we were getting along with our meal, as the beef was in request for the commercial room, and that was the cause of his frequent visits to the peephole; and he thought it was

far more polite to keep a watch upon us thus, to discover when we had done with the joint, than to keep on coming into the room upon one excuse or another for that purpose. But somehow the whole arrangement flavoured too much of the spy system to please us, and we even went so far as to suggest that we thought if the trapdoor was improved away altogether it would be a good thing, and that visitors would prefer if a joint were in demand to be honestly told so.

Leaving Battle, we entered upon a pleasant road, which led us, with many long stretches of ups and downs, through a wooded country abounding in almost every variety of tree that grows in Britain. By the side of the way, in one part, we noticed a wooden trough, fed by a small stream, thoughtfully erected thus for passing horses and cattle to refresh themselves. Such troughs are common enough in Derbyshire and some of the Northern counties, but we did not remember having observed any before in Sussex.

Soon after this we came upon a signpost at the fork of two roads, which though legible and in good condition was of no service to us, for the sole arm it possessed pointed in the direction from which we had come, and had painted upon it 'To Battle.' This information, however useful to parties travelling in the reverse direction, was, of course, well-known news and of no benefit to us. A few words may not be out of place here as to the different kinds of signposts we came across during our journey. There was the utterly useless signpost, whose arms

had long since disappeared ; the provoking one, with arms existing, but with the inscriptions that were once upon them indecipherable or weathered entirely away ; then there was the post, like the one in question, in perfect order, but affording no information not already known ; then there was the tantalising sign, with one arm stretched out at the junction of two roads, pointing in the most unbiassed manner exactly midway between these, so that it was impossible to discover to which it related ; then there was the lying post, most of all to be dreaded (one of these took me upon a certain well-remembered occasion miles out of my way)—this post may be perfect in itself, but boldly points the wrong direction. The reason for the existence of such I cannot say ; perhaps they may have been turned round for 'a lark,' perhaps—let us more charitably hope—blown down, and carelessly re-erected by the farmer on whose land they stood, without troubling to discover whether they had been properly replaced. We have not met many such posts, but still we have come across a few of this deceptive kind. Then, of course, there is the perfect signpost, in good condition, possessed of all its arms, with the inscriptions on these plainly legible, sometimes even with the distance in miles written after the names of the places —very useful information in these days, when milestones may practically be said to be non-existent : this is the rarest post of all.

Presently we came upon one of those scenic revelations only to be had in England. A turn in the road, and what a delightful surprise ! A peep

from between overarching trees of a sunlit stretch of country, with ancient mansion, farmsteads, and cottages, with hedgerows, cornfields, and pastures in pleasant variety scattered about, with here and there the grey tower or spire of some rural church showing where a hamlet lay, and through the green meadows in the valley a little silvery stream wound in and out of the prospect in a delightfully irregular manner, the whole scene being bounded by wooded hills, tenderly tinted by the hazy sunshine, with distant uplands beyond, a delicate pearly grey fading away into the palest blue. A typical picture of rural England, an everyday one, yet none the less beautiful because so abounding. The above is but an outline—and a very imperfect one at that—of the scene ; the mind of the reader must fill up the canvas, and the result will fall short of the reality just as the powers of the writer or the imagination of the reader is limited. If such scenery were only foreign, out of ready reach in some distant land, entailing a sea voyage or crossing the Channel, a long tedious railway journey, and the usual custom house civilities, how we should all rush to see it ! how loudly we should exclaim in praise of its soft, mellow, homelike beauty ! but being at our doors, in our own country, all around us—why, we regard it not at all.

During the whole of our journey, except when in the neighbourhood of fashionable watering-places, we came across only two tourists, and these we both met one evening at a country inn—and the very fact was particularly emphasised to us by its great rarity. We were impressed by it almost as much as though

we had seen a post-chaise drive up to the door. Yes, in truth, this rural England, with all its wealth of quiet loveliness, its winsome charms, its countless unfamed beauty-spots, its unaffected naturalness, its ancient homes, old-time hamlets, and quaintly comfortable hostelries of the bygone coaching days, is shamefully neglected by those who should know and love it best. I think it is an American writer who remarks: 'These out-of-the-way old-world English hamlets, so charmingly natural, unsophisticated, and picturesque, each with their grey hallowed churches, are about as little known to most Britons as a remote New England village.' And though the statement may not be wholly true, still there is a great deal of truth in it. Other countries have their own special beauties, but the English landscape is unique in itself, for there is a subtle charm about it that beggars description. A mellow, homelike, restful look it possesses, a happy mean between the grand and pretty, for there is an equal absence of both greatness and pettiness about it. A loveable, liveable land, that speaks to the heart—not showy or magnificent, but oh! how beautiful! How peace-bestowing to the wanderer, tired of the thronged city's ceaseless toil and din!

> Not a grand nature. . . .
> A sweet familiar nature, stealing in,
> As a dog might, or child, to touch your hand,
> Or pluck your gown, and humbly mind you so
> Of presence and affection.

It was indeed a fair prospect we looked upon—a picture so complete in itself that an artist might

have arranged everything in it. Had such been painted just as we saw it, I feel sure that the critic looking at the picture would have exclaimed that it was too manifestly composed, for the scene was too perfect to be real, a false idealism ; and yet during our outing we had met with how many such scenes ! It seems to me that artists nowadays too much neglect the picturesque, for fear of having their pictures called pretty, so they wilfully select subjects not for their beauty but for their lack of it ; they delight in startling contrasts, breadth and power, as they call it ; they handle prosaic subjects with consummate skill, which causes you to admire the picture more on account of the difficulties overcome than for its beauty. Sensationalism, however striking, is not artistic truth. The beauty of form and colour are more enduring and pleasure-giving than a mere clever *tour de force*. Beauty lasts for ever, fashions cannot change it, no more than it can alter the sky ; and, after all, people buy pictures to look at and enjoy, not to wonder about. Boldness is a good quality, but it may be overdone, and timid boldness is unendurable. Are we to improve upon Nature, and ignore the picturesque wholly for the grand and effective or the smudgily suggestive ? Nature does not always deal in strong contrasts, she does not everlastingly oppose her highest lights against her greatest darks : such effects are rather the exception than the rule with her, but landscape painters of the present day have made it the rule rather than the exception. Perhaps exhibitions have a deal to do with this ; artists strive one against another to pro-

duce something that shall arrest attention, from the midst of the acres of coloured canvases and other startling pictures that are supposed to adorn the walls of our galleries. For what chance would a quiet, harmonious, truthful, unexaggerated study from Nature have with the assertive canvases around ?

Proceeding onwards, we came to Robertsbridge, an excellent specimen of a Sussex town, clean, compact, neat, and delightfully unprogressive. One great charm about Sussex is its pure atmosphere, bright skies, and the absence of commonplace commercial cities with all their smoke and grime, which seem to contaminate the air for miles around. Here we noticed a somewhat quaint little inn, having a weather-tiled upper story, and with an entrance to it by a flight of stone steps sideways to the street.

A long bridge, or rather a series of bridges, took us over the Rother and adjacent stretch of flat land. This river is unique in one respect, that it has its source in a spring that rises in the cellar of a mansion, known by the name of Rother House. Like most Sussex rivers, this is a mere stream, but picturesque because so stream-like. Then, passing through a charming pastoral country, we came to the pretty but sleepy little hamlet of Salehurst. We pulled up here, the better to inspect the old church, which is an exceedingly fine structure, with a weather-beaten embattled tower. We were unfortunately unable to view the interior, for we could not discover any one who had the keys. The men of old must have loved their religion to build places of worship so grandly in such remote parts, otherwise

they would not have wrought so well, and with such evidence of enjoyed handicraft, in spots where their labour of love would be seen by so few. Manifestly they built to the glory of God, not for the praise of man. These stately rural fanes speak eloquently of the piety of those whose worldly prosperity thus found pious outward expression. Now we build grand houses but mean churches, we put our art-work (or what we please to consider such) on the walls of our homes; we take care to have them luxurious and beautiful, whatever our churches may be.

We could not help observing (as at Alfriston and other places) what humble abodes the priests of pre-Reformation times were content to dwell in, so long as the edifices they raised to God were beautiful. The present generation, who only go to church once a week, who keep their religion for Sunday, what matters it to them if their places of worship are ugly, commonplace, and possess an unmistakable flavour of the contractor? They serve their purpose as a meeting house—why waste money on a building that no one enters save for a short hour or so one day in seven, and that is religiously locked up for the rest? Of such a structure could a poet say, looking back from the ages still in the womb of time—

> The solemn arches breathe in stone;
> Window and wall have lips to tell
> The mighty faith of days unknown?

Rather would it not be—

> Window and wall have lips to tell
> The little faith of days gone by?

Here I may remark, the sermons we have listened to now and again in country churches by no means impressed us by their quality or suitability to the congregations gathered to listen to them. They appeared to us to be of a kind to fill the Dissenting places of worship; for any more dreary or somniferous occupation than listening to some of these spiritless discourses I can hardly conceive.

By the preacher perplex'd,
How shall we determine?
'Watch and pray,' says the text—
'Go to sleep,' says the sermon.

Some of these country clergymen—not many, but still one comes across such well-meaning but mistaken parsons now and then—by their preaching, wholly above their listeners, make even Paradise appear to them anything but a desirable place. I can quite understand the feelings of a certain Lincolnshire poacher who, on his death-bed, exclaimed to his worthy but prosaic parson, who had come to talk to him of a better land :—

I sit i' yon stright-made heaven,
Whear saints an' aangels sing,
An' niver hear a pheasant craw,
Nor th' skirr o' a partridge wing!

Some clergymen, it appears to me, preach an unloveable religion; they remind me much of the Highland pastor who, going along the streets of Edinburgh one Sabbath morning, said he met 'a number of people walking along, actually smiling, as though they were perfectly happy,' adding, 'Ah! but it was an awfu' sight!'

Salehurst, as I have said, is a sleepy place. Two roads led out of it, both tending in the direction we were going, and, as we were uncertain which of these was the right way, we waited about for some time, but nobody appeared on the scene ; then we ventured to knock at the door of a farmhouse and a cottage, but without arousing any one. Truly there was a signpost with 'To Bodiam' written thereon (our night's destination), but it was one of those provoking posts before mentioned, that pointed precisely midway between each road, so that with our best endeavours we were wholly unable to decide to which it related. At last we decided to drive on and take our chance. Other things being equal, we selected the road that promised to lead us through the prettiest country ; and, after all, we reasoned to ourselves, what does it matter whether we are right or wrong, we are bound to arrive somewhere ? We had not proceeded far when we met a lad carrying a parcel, and the following edifying conversation took place :—

'Can you tell me, my lad, if this is the way to Bodiam ?'

'Noa, I can't.'

'Do you know where it leads to ?'

'Noa, I don't.'

'Where are you coming from, then ?'

'Hoam.'

'And what is the name of the place you live in ?' This we asked in the hope of discovering indirectly if we were on the right road.

'It ain't got no name. I lives over yonder,' pointing backwards indefinitely into space.

'Then, where are you going to?'

'I don't know.'

'But you are going somewhere, surely?'

'Ees.'

And you don't know where you are going to?'

'Noa.'

And so we left our bright and intelligent youth. I have, I believe, reported the conversation faithfully, word for word, and give it here simply as a sample of rural density and obstinate stupidity rarely equalled, though occasionally to be met with in a less pronounced form, even in this age of School Boards and advanced civilisation. He was, I think, about the stupidest boy that we have ever met during our road wanderings, and we have now and then come across some unique specimens of stupidity, but this Sussex youth excelled them all. Even our man could not refrain from remarking, 'The people hereabouts don't seem over bright, sir,' and we could not but agree with him.

However, our road proved to be a very pretty one, winding round an isolated hill, which was crowned by a ruined windmill: a landmark for miles around—and a very useful landmark too, as we afterwards discovered. Indeed, we were told—on what authority I know not—by a party we met at our inn during the evening, that the old structure was maintained by the Ordnance Survey 'people,' as being of particular service to them in their labours. We found it marked on our maps 'Silver

Hill' ; and we were further informed by the party before mentioned that in times past the old mill was a rendezvous of smugglers, and that the old miller was considered a 'safe' man, and that many a keg of spirits had been stored away in the building. Our road now took us upon high ground, and then came a long and steep descent, at the bottom of which, not knowing where we were coming to, we found ourselves at Bodiam—a pleasant surprise, for we had driven on quite trusting to fortune. We pulled up at a little rural inn by the wayside here, and, as we discovered they could give us stabling for our horses, determined to spend the night there.

As there was yet an hour or so of daylight left, we set off at once to get a view of the old castle. A pleasant footpath across the fields led us to the ancient ruins, and very picturesque the once stern stronghold looked, its grey walls lighted up by the setting sun, its moat doubling the castle on its banks, and reflecting the gold of the sky above. At a little cottage near the ruins we procured the keys, and were allowed to wander over the time-worn structure guideless ; but we were not without company, for on the summit of one of the towers we found a couple of owls glaring at us out of their sleepy eyes, evidently wondering what we wanted there at that late hour. And as the darkness grew apace we concluded that rambling about crumbling ruins, scrambling up and down breakneck much-worn stone stairs, was not the safest of occupations, so we wisely left the owls in solitary possession, and returned to

our little inn, determining to devote the next morning to a more leisurely exploration of the place.

Bodiam Castle is a very perfect and picturesque specimen of a feudal stronghold. Compared to Carnarvon or Conway, a baby castle truly, but, for all that, to me far more interesting, because so complete in itself—viewed externally, that is—with towers, walls, water-filled moat, and everything, excepting the drawbridge, as it must have appeared in 'the brave days of old,' saving, of course, that the walls have been toned down with age, and have the gathered tints of centuries upon them.

I know of no other castle but this in England externally so complete and well preserved, built after one comprehensive design, at one time, and unaltered afterwards. But still, for all this, Bodiam is a mere shell, and its perfect outward appearance is due to the excellent hands into which, in its old age, the ancient castle has fallen. Unlike Pevensey and many others, it has never been turned into a ready-hewn stone quarry by local builders, or suffered, like some, the greater indignity of having supplied roadmakers with handy material. The form of the building is that of a square, with a round tower at each corner, commanding for the archers a large range of fire. The lofty walls between these have a square tower in their centres, the contrasting forms of the round and square towers being very pleasing. Bodiam has no keep, and perhaps was none the weaker for this want, for, the rest of a stronghold in the hands of an enemy, the garrison taking to the keep could but prolong a fruitless struggle.

BODIAM CASTLE.

ST. GEORGE, HANOVER SQUARE
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

One peculiarity about the defences of this fortress is worthy of note. An arrangement we have never observed elsewhere is that the stone-vaulted ceiling of the passage beyond the portcullis is pierced with holes at the intersection of the arches, where ornamental bosses in such groined roofs, as far as my knowledge extends, are always to be found. This striking departure from architectural rules must have been taken for some special purpose, and none other seems so reasonable as to suppose these openings were made to pour down molten lead upon the assailants.

Bodiam is situated low in a valley, doubtless so placed in order to secure a supply of water for the moat. Still, strangely enough, this is obtained by artificial damming; and it seemed to us that this earth dam might have been cut without much difficulty or severe loss by any besiegers, though of course for a time the mud would be as great a protection as the water. Having placed his castle in a hollow, why the builder did not go to the very lowest portion of this puzzled us exceedingly, for then the water of the moat could not possibly have been drawn off, and as the surrounding land at that time would be undrained, a mere morass, it would have been still further protected by this; but I presume the old builders knew well what they were about, and, as the structure is most carefully planned in all other respects, the architect doubtless had good reasons for acting as he did in the matter of situation.

The moat, we noticed, was covered by a profusion of water lilies, whose broad green leaves and white

flowers helped greatly the picturesqueness of the scene, so peaceful and unwarlike now. Altogether, Bodiam, viewed from any point without its walls, affords to the observer an excellent idea of the appearance of a feudal castle in its prime. Externally there is nothing to suggest that it is a mere shell; were the drawbridge to be replaced and the walls made to look somewhat fresher, it would appear much as it did when first erected. I know no other castle dating from the reign of Richard II. of which the same can be said; and on this account Bodiam is specially worthy of attention.

How abounding in interest is this beautiful county of Sussex, in verity an epitome of England, with its hills and woods, its meadows and cornfields, its wild uplands and well-tilled valleys, its spreading downs and open sea! All kinds of scenery are contained within its borders: some portions of it even reminded us of Scotland. This fact may appear strange to those who only know of Sussex from the railway journey from London to one of its fashionable watering-places; but in reality, though he may imagine he does, the railway traveller, as a rule, knows little of the country he passes through. As it is just possible that some of my readers may think that I have exaggerated the hilliness of Sussex in comparing it to Scotland, I may here say that Horace Walpole, who drove through the county in 1749—seeing it, therefore, in like manner to ourselves—thus writes in a letter of that date: 'We thought ourselves in the northernmost part of Britain. . . . We journeyed over *Alpine mountains*, drenched in clouds.' The italics

are my own. Not a single line that traverses Sussex gives to the passengers thereon any idea of its hilly beauty, if I except the single rail from Tunbridge Wells to Hailsham—a line that winds in and out of the Sussex highlands, with heavy gradients, not fitted for fast travelling, but for these reasons one of the most pleasant bits of railway I know. An absence of tunnels and cuttings just where the scenery is most beautiful distinguishes it; but then it climbs the hills, does not go under them, therefore the pace is necessarily slow, wholly unsuited to the feverish haste of the nineteenth century, though the speed is sufficient for the rural requirements of the sparsely populated country it serves.

Then, again, what a wealth of good things, archæologically speaking, Sussex can boast of! Not counting the many quaint and interesting houses, half-timbered and otherwise, we had passed on our day's wanderings, the many solemn old churches, nor even the ancient and historic Abbey of Battle, worthy of a long pilgrimage of itself—omitting even all these, we had still seen very much during our stage. Pevensey, the oldest castle in England; Hurstmonceaux, the grandest brick building left to us from the mediæval times; and Bodiam, the most picturesquely perfect specimen of an old feudal stronghold, with moat and walls intact as when first dug and raised. Enough of varied interest to satisfy surely the most exacting tourist: even our American cousins, who love to rush about and see as much as possible—or impossible, for that matter—in the time allotted, could hardly desire more in a day's work—

or pleasuring? And so we utterly failed to understand Walpole's complaint, when (to quote him again) he says: 'I have set up my staff and finished my pilgrimages for this year' (1749). 'Sussex is a great damper of curiosity.' For our own part, we deemed it the very reverse; but then, perhaps, like almost all people of former times, Walpole considered hills as a nuisance, as obstructing the view, for in old writings we continually find this objection to them. 'Horrid,' 'dreadful,' 'ugly,' 'forbidding,' are the epithets applied to the mountains by our ancestors, godfathered by Dr. Johnson, Gray, and others.

The hamlet of Bodiam and its immediate surroundings, the castle of course excepted, has little to attract the visitor, though the country around is of great beauty. The tiny river Rother runs past it, which here divides Kent from Sussex, and we had a chat with a man we found on the bridge that crosses the stream. We discovered him busily doing nothing, an occupation that country people appear to indulge in with great satisfaction to themselves, and, moreover, without ever in the least wearying of it. We had observed this particular man upon the bridge at the same spot overnight, and the even chances are, from what we know of country folk, that were we to come here again in a year's time, we should in all probability find him still so occupied. The river, we learnt during the course of our conversation, was a tidal one, and the Bodiamites depended nearly wholly upon it for their general supplies, and for coal in particular; 'but just now,' we were informed, 'the tidal gates are closed at Rye for repairs, and

we're very short of coal and some other things.' So this little place relies for its supplies in the same primitive way it has done for centuries past. The barges are brought up here to a little pier by the inflow of the tidal water, and return with the stream when the tide is running out: a cheap and simple way of transit, but one liable to be stopped any day by a single lock being out of order. It may be of interest here to remark that, according to the old 'Chronicles of Battel Abbey,' the monks had a wharf at 'Bodeiam' on which they landed their goods by vessel. Our informant told us that he had been at Bodiam for nineteen years, and thought he should like a change now; he was just thinking over the matter when we came to him, and had thought it over for some years past; and, doubtless, he will sit on that bridge and think about it for years to come, for it takes these country folk a long while to make up their minds—so long, indeed, that frequently they never get made up at all.

A stiff climb took us out of Bodiam, and after leaving it we came upon high ground. The mounting over, we traversed an elevated stretch of level land, that afforded us glorious prospects, extending into both Kent and Sussex. We had not driven far when we came upon a party whom we presumed to be an artist; we discovered him busily engaged sketching the gable end of an old cottage. As a brother wielder of the brush, we could not resist the temptation to stop and inspect what he was doing. By the way, when I am painting, I particularly dislike people coming up to me to see what I am about;

but I fear we do not always practise what we preach. However, the gentleman in question did not resent our intrusion, and, after all, he did not turn out to be an artist, but an architect taking notes of 'bits' likely to be useful to him in his profession. Our meeting led to a long and very interesting discussion. He told us that he had been making a tour afoot through Sussex, gathering hints from many of the old houses that so abound in that county. 'I always find,' he said, 'that I can make good use of the designs that did duty so many years ago in my modern work, with a little alteration and a few adaptations to suit present requirements.' Then he showed us a number of his sketches, kindly explaining their professional utilities. 'You see that chimney,' he remarked, pointing to a drawing of one that struck us as being somewhat curious; 'well, I took it from a cottage near here some years back. I was attracted by it at first as being both original and picturesque, and deemed it was put up merely for ornament; but I found, as usual when I reasoned to myself, the cause of its being built thus: that use and beauty, as is generally the case in most old work, went together. I discovered that the form was good, exactly suited to its purpose; and having secured this desirable result, the architect of the past had proceeded to ornament it. It was not a meaningless freak in brick and mortar, but the legitimate outcome of local requirements. Now, until I had seen it, I was always puzzled how to keep the wet from out my chimneys when much exposed. You see that slope of brickwork narrowing to the top, and the

curious structure crowning the whole ; well, the slope protects it most perfectly from wet, and the quaint arrangement above is not merely ornamental, as you might judge at first sight, for I discovered upon constructing a similar chimney—I am not above copying good things—that it was a complete preventive of smoking. And how much better and more effective than the hideous cowls we have invented for that purpose this little bit of minor architecture! Moreover, it is simply and strongly constructed, secure against the severest storms. Yes, I am very fond of my profession ; but it has its drawbacks. Now, when you see a picture, you judge of the artist and praise or condemn him according to its merits or failings ; so, in a similar manner, you judge of an architect by his buildings, only there is this important difference between an artist and an architect : the artist composes and paints his picture as it seems best to him, but the poor architect is to a great extent at the mercy of the whims of his clients. Not long ago I was showing the elevations of a country residence to a gentleman for whom I had designed it. He knew no more of art or architecture than I knew of cotton-spinning—his trade, but he insisted on making certain alterations in the plans which detracted greatly from the appearance of the house. It was useless my protesting ; he said he knew what he wanted, and as he was paying for it he meant to have it as he liked. There was nothing for me to do but either to throw up the commission or spoil, to a greater or less extent, the elevation by the alterations. As I am a young man, and have my own

way to make, I could not afford to do the former, so the house had to suffer. But, you may exclaim, if I was paid for my work, how could the matter affect me? But it does. Different people see the house, they are told who the architect of it is; possibly they are not all so ignorant of art or the fitness of things as my client, and I get the credit of all the faults and shortcomings of the building that in reality were due to the unreasonable demands of the gentleman who employed me. So it is, varying only in degree, we poor architects are not at liberty to produce work just as we would and deem best, and in this respect the artist has a supreme advantage over us, and I envy him his freedom accordingly.'

As we drove along, we pondered a good deal over the conversation we had had, which naturally set our thoughts running in the direction of builders and buildings. Now, no one who keeps his eyes at all open can fail to perceive that an attempt has been made of late years to break through the square-box order of architecture, and to give us something more interesting in our city streets than the dreary dulness and discord of pseudo-classic structures in long-drawn-out rows and terraces, monotonously repeated. The so-called Queen Anne style seems to be all the rage with architects at the present time. It is undoubtedly a vast improvement upon the work that immediately preceded it, and a step in the right direction, notwithstanding that much of it has a certain look of eccentricity for its own sake, and a love for oddities that is not altogether pleasing because so evidently designed—wilful excrescences, not

construction legitimately ornamented; and, because of this, they impress the beholder as being what they are, purposely added quaintnesses. It may be, all the same, that we are feeling our way to something better, and that in the course of years a new school of architecture may be evolved out of our present attempts.

It must be borne in mind that great variations are constantly being made and new features introduced into this style of architecture; in fact, a modern Queen Anne house is about as unlike a genuine building of that period as it is possible for two professedly similar things to be: the only resemblance is in the title, which is a complete misnomer, and it might much more truthfully be termed Victorian, and probably in years to come it will be.

The outcome of all this seeking after novelty time alone can show. One thing is in favour of the new school: it is a free one, it is tied down by no severe uncompromising details, no set types of pillars, mouldings, architraves, and the like, no compulsory uniformity as to position of windows, and doorways, to obtain which undesirable precision frequently personal comfort and convenience are sacrificed. On the contrary, it has perfect freedom before it; in fact, it borrows a little here and there from nearly all previous schools of architecture, blending the various items together, often most skilfully, with modern developments, into an harmonious whole. As often, however, to confess the truth, it lamentably fails in this respect, the details of different periods clash disagreeably, they seem at deadly enmity with one another. Where such is the case, all quietude and

reposeful feeling is done away with. Very different in this respect and fortunate are modern architects, compared to their predecessors, whom the fashion of a former time compelled to erect nothing but classical structures—models of Grecian temples in modern England, tortured to doing duty for English homes!

But with all its advantages, merits, and, above all, its possibilities, I think it a matter for regret that the architects of to-day, instead of wandering about in the search for something original, have not been contented to copy, in spirit at least, the old English Tudor or Elizabethan work. This, moreover, adapts itself readily to modern requirements and conveniences. These styles, essentially national, have stood the trying test of time, and are certainly more beautiful, freer from studied eccentricity and planned irregularity than our misnamed Queen Anne. Time alone will prove whether, rather than have attempted a new departure, we had better not have contentedly abided by the best traditions of the past, confirmed as these have been by the approval of ages.

The perfectly original and pre-eminently picturesque Tudor and Elizabethan styles are at once thoroughly English and at home with their surroundings; in every respect are they superior to the stiff classical structures, with their dry meaningless details, endless repetition of similar forms, and wearying sameness, that a past century raised both in town and country.

The worst feature of some of the modern attempts is, that discord has taken the place of dulness. In the search for originality and quaint-

ness, old-time details are employed and unintelligently applied—details whose uses have long since passed away, and which are now, therefore, nothing but purposeless excrescences. And to make matters worse, wrong materials are sometimes used for these: iron for brick, and painted wood for carved stone, possibly more for economy than from ignorance, but the result is equally lamentable.

It is the reversal of the survival of the fittest, this reproduction of past forms without any fitness whatever for their present employment or adequate knowledge of their meanings. Gargoyles are placed here and there without fulfilling any practical purpose, since rain-water pipes are now always used. I know a case in point, of a church built recently in London, in which the gargoyles are stuck on for ornament, and were they to answer their purpose would simply pour their contents right upon the heads of the congregation who might be entering or leaving the building at the time! Could anything be more ridiculous? Amongst other things, we have watch turrets reproduced in modern residences, suggested by mediæval castles; these are built out at odd corners, wherever the architect may be able to find a place for them, they are of no service for light or room, and are needless for defence, besides being frequently full of wrong or inconsistent detail—anachronisms such things altogether, in reality as incongruous as would be a coat of mail upon a modern soldier. Accessories like these were not designed by the builders of old for picturesqueness; they were simply constructed as

matters of necessity or utility, and, having them to deal with, they frankly made a virtue of the obligation, ornamenting them with quaint shapes and forms, turning them into objects of beauty or interest, at the same time never losing sight of their original purpose.

An Old Sign-Post

A Village Church

CHAPTER XIII.

An Ancient Manor House—A Fine Old Staircase—Fortified Houses—The Ideal Past—Old Churches—Hawkhurst—English Gardens—Lamberhurst—A Breezy Drive—A Good Word for the British Climate—A Ruined Windmill—A Picturesque Farmhouse—The Fate of Old Coaching Inns—A Primitive Letter-box—An Old-fashioned Hostel—Hops as Creepers—The Landlords of the Past—An American's Opinion of English Country Inns—Guide-book Information—Where St. Paul's Cathedral Railings were cast—A Useful Windmill.

SHORTLY after leaving the architect we came to a long descent, half-way down which to the left, some distance from the road, backed by wooded hills, we observed an ancient manor house, stone-built, not half-timbered, like nearly all the others we had seen this journey. There were signs that it had been moated in times past, though where the water had presumably been was now a dry hollow, doing duty as an orchard. We could not resist the temptation to stop, and, taking our sketch-book with us, we did a little trespassing to get a better view of it. Just as we were about to commence a sketch, we noticed a man approaching us, who turned out to be the

bailiff. He took a great interest in the progress of the picture, and when we had finished it he asked us if we would like to have a look over the old house. He said: 'I manages the farm now, and live there all alone with my wife, so it's desolate like, but it's been a fine place in its day.' We gladly accepted his invitation, and congratulated ourselves upon our good fortune in being thus unexpectedly enabled to inspect the ancient home.

Upon a nearer approach we discovered it had a deserted appearance, not observable from the distance; the shutters were up against most of the windows, the gardens were uncared for, the walks were weed-grown, and generally the place had a neglected, haunted look. Coming to the entrance, the oak door of which was carved and had a quaint wrought-iron knocker and handle, we observed, cut in the stone above, the initials and date as follows:

H E. W E.
1 6 — 4 1.

Our guide knocked at the door, evidently little used: the sound of the knocking re-echoed in a mournful manner, that told of an uninhabited house, for the bailiff and his wife only occupied some rooms at the back. The interior wore a most wobegone look, cobwebs and the dust of ages had gathered in the vacant chambers, the floors and all the woodwork were of oak, literally black with age, and perhaps helped as well with dirt ingrained. 'You see, sir,' the man remarked to us, 'it's all real heart oak.' Then he showed us the staircase, of oak also,

a delightful bit of old-time work, a treat to look upon, though somewhat dilapidated, like all else about; a picture in wood was that old staircase, with its arcading, pillars, square carved newels, and balusters. We wished we had seen it before we met the architect, that we might have told him of our find; but possibly he knew of its existence, for the bailiff told us 'somebody come the other day and had a look at the staircase, and took measurements and drawings of each part, in order, he told me, that he might make one the same. He seemed mighty pleased with it.'

We could not glean much information as to the past history of the house from our conductor; it appeared his master did not care to live there, and, as he could not find a tenant for the place, he put the bailiff in to manage for him. The name of the house was, he said, Great Wigsell. 'It's a pity,' he remarked, 'that it should be left to go so to ruin like, for it's a fine place,' and we quite agreed with his opinion.

The situation of the old pile is a most enviable one, surrounded as it is on all sides by wooded hills. The house itself bore no evidences of having been fortified in any way; indeed, the date above the doorway proved that it was built at a period when military domestic architecture was no longer a necessity, although there were unmistakable signs that it was once encircled by a moat; possibly, however, the present structure was raised upon the site of an earlier one, designed to resist an attack, and so the reason for the existence of a former moat would be

explained. It is very interesting to trace, by the number of old buildings remaining to us, the gradual stepping-stones from the stern and massive feudal strongholds, through fortified halls and moated manor houses, to the peaceful homes of a later period. In those early days an Englishman's house was in truth his castle, giving the owner a sense of security and snugness when the drawbridge was raised each night, and the watchman kept a sleepless look-out from the turret tower, or paced around the embattled walls. They were picturesque times those, though not altogether pleasant ones to live in —exciting, adventurous times, when it was a proud boast for the head of the family to be able to say that not one of his ancestors had died (peacefully, like a good citizen) in his bed. Poet and painter delight to go back to them for subjects for their pen or brush, for a glamour of romance covers the days that are gone by, age has softened their harsher features down, and of them it may truly be said that 'it is distance that lends enchantment to the view.'

But even more interesting than the houses and castles of the past are the dear old churches scattered everywhere throughout the land. They are indeed 'sermons in stones,' histories in themselves. I do not know a single ancient country church that has not been altered from time to time during its long life. Each generation has impressed its mark upon these sacred edifices, has added a chapter to their changeful history. How little the majority of Englishmen appear to care for the treasure-store of beauty and old hallowed associations they possess in

them! How many of us are aware even of the existence of the little humble fane at Greenstead in Essex, the solitary relic remaining to us of the ancient wooden churches raised by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers in the pre Norman age? Its walls consist simply of half-trunks of trees raised on end, the inner sides being flattened. More than eight eventful centuries has this rude structure stood; how much longer no one can say. Americans cross the broad and stormy Atlantic, and stand with hushed reverence before such historic though humble fanes: we who by birthright own the rare heritage, how lightly we esteem it! From this primitive but picturesque wooden pile (built, possibly, centuries before the Normans came into the land) to that consummate glory of architecture, that miracle of man's brain and handiwork, a Gothic cathedral—with its soaring vaulted roof, its rare traceried windows of walled light, its grotesque carvings, and elaborate sculpture, so delicate of design, and inexhaustible in invention—is a step indeed, and traces of nearly all intermediate periods may be found in our village churches.

Those who, like ourselves, drive across country, and therefore possess a perfect control over their conveyance, and the ability to go where they will and stop where they choose, have a vast field of interest open to them, beyond the mere pleasure of viewing lovely scenery, by making an intelligent study of these ancient religious edifices. The modern pilgrim by road, who may not be learned in such matters, may add greatly to the charm and

pleasures of his journey, if he be so minded and have any love or reverence for the work of the mighty unquestioning faith of past days, by taking as his companion a small handbook of church architecture, of which there are several, both excellent and inexpensive, illustrated by explanatory cuts. The language of the carved and builded stone will then be revealed to him, he will be able to understand their pregnant meaning, and how full of signification they are. Let me take as an instance the first that comes to my mind, the impressive and purely Saxon tower of Earls Barton church, Northamptonshire. This bit of sturdy work bespeaks its parentage. Like all others of the kind, this tower has no buttresses, it stands proudly of its own simple strength. Then, of course, it has its other peculiar characteristics, as has every rural fane in a more or less degree, and herein lies their magnetic charm. The special feature about this tower is that it is constructed in part with long straight pieces of stone placed alternately in an upright and horizontal position, Stonehenge fashion. Early Saxon masonry this, and found in no other style; 'stone carpentry' it has been aptly called, and shows that the builders had only just come from wooden framing, and repeated in their first stone attempts the chief features of their timber edifices. Then how interesting it is to come upon one of the early Romanesque towers with a gabled roof, of which Sompting church in Sussex is an excellent example. And so we can trace the gradual growth through ages, till at last the perfect beauty of the Early English Gothic was evolved

from the crude but well-meaning rough timber structure, or, to go back, if you will, to a still more remote time, from the wickerwork, plastered with earth, that formed the first Christian church in Britain. But, going forwards instead of backwards, we can trace the degeneracy, slow but sure, of the living to the dead Gothic, and the classic style that followed, inspired by heathen temples, for they have all left their marks behind them in our churches. These last may be called the dark ages of architecture—a time when, indeed, all art seemed to have died out in England, and since which period no worthy original style has ever been invented by succeeding generations—as well it might not, for had not perfection been reached, the outcome of the thought and labour of centuries? The best we can do now is but an imitated mediævalism; we place stone upon stone, doubtless with worthy intentions, but too often, alas! the result is a meaningless mass of masonry, before which, compared to the old work, we can only stand silently and sadly, with a regretful feeling of our inability to do the like. We multiply old forms unwearyingly, but we have lost the spirit of the past; the work looks what it is, mechanical, it has not the manifest appearance of enjoyed craftsmanship, of loved labour that counted not the cost first of all. We build now chiefly to satisfy our pride; only in part, not solely *ad majorem gloriam Dei.*

Speaking still of our old country churches, it is interesting to note how in some counties, as in Leicestershire, stone spires of great grace and beauty are the rule; how others, such as Kent,

Surrey, or Hampshire, possess hardly any—none, as far as I am aware. These, on the other hand, possess sturdy towers surmounted by a low roof, or else crowned with a slight spire constructed of timber, often covered as well with wooden shingles. Then, again, it is curious to observe, by way of contrast, the frequent absence of any kind of tower in Wales and amongst our mountain lands: the inhabitants of these were poor, and, as a rule, a simple bell-turret sufficed them. But there are notable exceptions to this rule, as at Great Salkeld church in Cumberland, and others scattered about near the Border. The tower of this is embattled, strongly built with massive walls, pierced with narrow slits for windows, with a substantial oaken door for access—iron-plated this outside, and further strengthened within by iron bars; more like a stern Norman keep than a portion of a peaceful place of worship, but evidently so built to afford a place of refuge and temporary defence against a sudden Border raid. But one might write pages without exhausting this subject; an old country church, with its stone records of past centuries, its ancient brasses and altar-tombs to knight-crusaders and valiant warriors, affords never-ending food for reflection. And such romances in stone are to be met with almost everywhere throughout the land. Our old churches form part and parcel of our history: within their hallowed walls the presence of our long-departed and forgotten forefathers seems to linger still; as we step through their ancient, crumbling doorways we step back centuries, and as we stand before the sculptured monuments of the brave dead,

and trace their ancient records, when such is possible, we may bring back to our mind some picture of the past :—

> Warrior ! whose image on thy tomb,
> With shield and crested head,
> Sleeps proudly in the purple gloom
> By the stain'd window shed ;
> The records of thy name and race
> Have faded from the stone,
> Yet through a cloud of years I trace
> What thou hast been and done.

Leaving Great Wigsell, we shortly afterwards came to the picturesque little town of Hawkhurst. Considering its size, it is astonishing that the railways have not yet invaded it ; it does not even indulge in a branch line. Perhaps the hilliness of the surrounding country may have something to do with the fact ; be that as it may, it is pleasant to discover, in this iron age, when the land is gridironed all over with railways, some town actually out of sight and sound of the ubiquitous steam whistle. Hawkhurst is a much-spread-out place, and, in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, covers a quantity of ground. A picturesque spot it is, with some fine old Scotch firs upon its ancient green, that give a character to the place. Most of its houses, great as well as small, are surrounded by pleasant gardens—real old-fashioned gardens, not the miserable bits of brick-wall enclosed ground that do duty for such in suburban London. And is there a more delightful spot to wander or moon about in than an old English garden ? and if it has some clipped yews

and a moss-begrown sundial, so much the better. Hawkhurst possesses an interesting church of the time of Edward III.; above each of its two porches is a parvis chamber. It possesses, also, by way of contrast, an uninteresting modern church. One might spend a day in the old building, and find it all too short; a few minutes in the new one would more than suffice. The one has made its history, romance is written on its every stone; the other has its history to make. Possibly but few people are aware that this rural and retired spot was once the seat of a busy iron industry, and that none other than William Penn started and worked the first furnace.

As we approached the town, we noticed an old cottage with a tree-surrounded pool of water in front. It looked familiar to us, though we had never been in Hawkhurst till that day; then it suddenly came to our remembrance that it had formed the subject of a drawing copy at school, and very faithfully had the artist represented it. Yes, we had painted that very cottage long years ago, with the tree-girt rush-grown pool and bordering trees, without ever having seen them. It was a somewhat strange fact that, during our drive through both Sussex and Kent, we ever and again came upon spots and scenes that we recognised as old acquaintances, from having seen them previously reproduced in paintings upon the walls of various picture galleries. One especially impressed us: an old moated manor house that attracted our attention in a water-colour collection, where it was entitled, if I remember

AN OLD MOATED MANOR HOUSE.

HANOVER

aright, 'An Old English Home.' At the time we deemed the drawing too beautiful to be reality, an artist's conception rather than an existing fact; great, then, as may be imagined, was our delightful surprise in coming, wholly unprepared for anything of the kind, upon the romantic original: verily a poem in stone, with its quaint gables, many-mullioned windows, clustering stacks of chimneys, ivy-covered walls, and weed-grown moat. We recognised at a glance our friend in water-colours; but unless we had seen with our own eyes this charming old home, we could not have believed that anything half so romantic ever had actual existence.

A glorious breezy drive we had from Hawkhurst to Lamberhurst. Our road took us along high ground, affording us grand views to the right over the woodlands of Kent, and to the left over the blue hills of Sussex. A more beautiful country than that which we passed through that day the mind of man could not conceive nor heart desire; a veritable Arcadia it seemed to us upon that sunny morning, the landscape all rejoicing in the summer sheen, and the great charm of it was that our Arcadia was a reality, not a vain imagining. Truly we saw only one side of the picture; the land, pleasant as it is, lies not always thus basking in the soft summer sunshine, the sky above it is not always blue and white with fine-weather cloudlets. A perfect day like the one we had would almost make Gower Street look beautiful; how much, therefore, does not such enhance the loveliness of the English rural landscape, especially when that is made up in parts of

the fair county of Kent and the wooded hills of romantic Sussex? And when I say romantic Sussex, I mean it; so replete is that portion of England with relics of the never-returning past, besides its scenic attractions of no mean order, that I feel I would be quite contented to live within and not leave its borders for a lifetime. Indeed, I doubt if there is a single man who knows one English county thoroughly, and there are few counties that take more knowing or better repay a pilgrimage than sunny Sussex. A rose-covered cottage may not mean perfect bliss to its inhabitants, but it suggests cosy comfort and contented happiness far more than does a square box of a building, or a London suburban stucco villa; and so the soft verdure of the fields around us that day, the changing greens of the wind-stirred foliage, the brightness of the sky above, the peeps of distant hills and gleam of stilly water, the far-spreading landscape, so space-expressing, gave to us a feeling of repose and a dreamy indefinable delight that less beautiful prospects might have failed to inspire. All things above, around, and beneath us were abounding in beauty; a wonderful diversity of light and shade was over the whole land. It was a sun-filled atmosphere we breathed, soft and soothing; it made existence for its own sake a supreme pleasure. And the sun-filled air was charged with many sweet perfumes, that came wafted to us on its balmy wings. The drowsy winds brought to us in turn the odours of many wild flowers, the incense of new-mown hay, the resinous fragrance of pine-trees, and with these

were borne as well rural sounds in harmony, the slumberous hum of bees, the bleating of distant sheep, or the lowing of far-off kine. Given a fine day and a pretty, unknown country, what can be more delightful than to drive through it expectantly in the pleasant summer time ; and, with all the abuse that has been lavished upon the English climate, such fine days are by no means the rarity many seem to imagine. I may state, as a simple fact, that during the whole of this journey we were never delayed a day by rain : rain, of course, we had, but never such a regular downpour as to keep us inn-bound. Changeable weather, with a supply of clouds about, is by no means a thing wholly to be despised ; then it is the distance looks so near, and the far-off hills become a lovely blue, the air, fresh and exhilarating, is washed by the rain from all haze and impurities, and the many varying colours of the landscape are brought out in a wonderful manner. Then there is the delicious freshness of a rainy day, and the charm of a constant play of light and shade everywhere, as the sun now and again breaks out, or the clouds anon gain the mastery. Wet days certainly cause muddy roads, but on the other hand they allay dust, and when you are driving dust is far more disagreeable than mud. A rainless climate, though poets may write lovingly in praise thereof, is an abomination to me ; and I speak feelingly in the matter, having driven across the sunny land of California during the dry season, when the roads were a foot deep in dust, which rose in clouds and penetrated everywhere, the country, besides, all bare and

brown for want of moisture. A parched-up land is not refreshing to look upon. How often and often, when I was travelling there, did I not long for a regular wet day, for a sight of the fresh green verdure of my beloved England! The more I travel abroad, ever the more beautiful seems my own country to me.

Of course people's opinions about climates vary. An American writer declares that we have 'no climate, only an assortment of different kinds of weather.' But I like variety; even endless sunshine becomes in time wearingly monotonous, and under such conditions clouds and rain a great relief, a something much to be grateful for, and earnestly desired.

If it rains in England, is it always sunshine abroad? In my experience of Continental travel I have been more hindered and troubled by wet weather than ever I have at home. With us the rain falls softly, as a rule; it does not penetrate with that disagreeable persistency, worthy of a better cause, it does in other lands. Few things escaped Shakespeare's notice, and does he not remark of mercy that 'it droppeth as the *gentle rain* from heaven'? But is the weather abroad so very superior, after all? I chanced, the other day, to come across the report of the Bordeaux Observatory for January 1885, and this is what I read: 'There was not one single fine clear day in the month. On twenty-six days the sky was entirely overcast and cloudy; on twenty-four it rained; on nine it froze, raining also on seven of these; on two days it

snowed heavily; and the thirteenth and thirty-first were marked by a succession of storms.' Had that been an English weather report, how we should shrug our shoulders as we scanned it, and exclaim what a detestable climate! Englishmen are, amongst themselves at any rate, a race of grumblers when the matter in consideration is their native land. I should much like to know if there is any country or climate in all the wide world that would satisfy a true-born Briton better than his despised own, were he compelled to live in it all the year round. The ideal and the reality are two different things: the poet's paradise—

> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly,

though it sounds exceedingly enchanting, would, as a stern matter of fact, be a most undesirable spot to live in—a treeless, grassless, parched-up desert. Better far than the poet's ideal our own actual England.

I have already said what a beautiful drive we had from Hawkhurst to Lamberhurst. At one spot we came upon a ruined windmill, looking desolate and forsaken; it had doubtless done good service in its day, but now past all work and going fast to decay, the home of the bat and the owl, dark with age, moss-grown and lichen-stained, with weeds and briars flourishing around its foot, ruinous and picturesque. There is always a feeling of sadness in viewing ruins of any kind—they suggest the inevitable fate pertaining to all things of earth; even an humble cottage

dismantled tells its story as plainly as a stately abbey or grim feudal castle desolated and devastated. From this spot the views around on three sides were simply enchanting, the other was hidden by a near wood. From the blue space-softened distance, over miles of waving woods and undulating greenery, to the old ruin close at hand, our eyes wandered in a delightfully uncontrolled freedom. As a rule without hardly an exception, we have found that, wherever a windmill stands, from that spot is sure to be a goodly prospect, which may be accounted for by the fact that windmills have of necessity to be placed high and open to the 'four winds of heaven' to secure an unimpeded motive power; and where the winds can traverse free the eye can range as unconfined. Therefore, if you are travelling though a hilly country, be sure now and again to make for a windmill; your climb or tramp will be certain to bring you a rich reward.

Shortly after parting company with the windmill, a characteristic feature in the landscape for miles around, with its two ruined, bent, and battered sails, we came upon a rambling old building in the Sussex style. This, from its position, standing by the roadside with adjacent stabling, we judged had been a prosperous coaching hotel in the pre-railway days; now it has been converted into a farmhouse, which conversion has robbed the ancient structure but little, if anything, of its former picturesqueness. Too often the fate of such old inns is to be turned into poor tenements or labourers' cottages, and to see them thus in their old age fallen from their high

estate is a sad sight; better far to convert them, when practicable, into pleasant farmsteads.

Then we came to a signpost with a notice-board attached offering a reward for any damage done to it—an excellent and, it appeared from our experience, a very wholesome proceeding, for most of the guide-posts we have come across have been, either by accident, age, or wilful destruction, rendered useless; and our impression is, from careful inspection of a number of these, that the majority have suffered rather from the destroying hand of man than that of time. Indeed, once, when travelling in the wilds of Yorkshire, we chanced to remark upon the general absence of these friends of the strange wayfarer, and were informed that the authorities who had to deal with the matter had quite given up the task of erecting fresh ones in the more remote districts, because in the winter time they found that they were invariably cut down, or in some mysterious manner disappeared, it being supposed that the cottagers appropriated them for firewood, though their destruction had not been traced home to any one.

Proceeding onwards, we observed a primitive letter-box nailed to a post by the wayside, possibly so erected by the owners of a distant house in which to receive their letters from the passing postman. It appeared to us that this might easily be robbed. Evidently people in these parts are honest; but still, for all that, the roads are free to every one, and gipsies, tramps, and especially hoppers in their season, are not generally very particular about the

rights of ownership. Perhaps letters in these days of crossed cheques have little attraction for them ; the chance of gain in plundering a letter-box is so small compared to the risk that wandering vagabonds prefer to appropriate, when they have the opportunity, more marketable commodities. There is a tradition, which has even been credited by some authorities, that in Saxon times the highways were so safe that any one might travel unmolested 'the whole length and breadth of the land with a bag of gold in hand.' It is a pity we do not possess the secret of the manner in which those sturdy Saxons managed to govern the country so admirably.

Lamberhurst is a very charming village, picturesque in itself and happy in its position in a secluded wooded valley. Cobbett, in his 'Rural Rides,' pronounces it to be 'one of the most beautiful villages that man ever set his eyes upon.' For 'man,' perhaps, one should read 'Cobbett.' A pleasant spot, however, is Lamberhurst, without doubt. As we drove along the village we observed a long, low, old-fashioned inn, with flowers in the windows and upon the porch, just one of those past-time hostels that rejoice the heart of the weary traveller, and one that, I am sure, would have made glad Shenstone, Dr. Johnson, and other inn-lovers of bygone days. Driving into the stable yard here, we noticed hops growing as creepers over the buildings ; and very charming creepers they make, more beautiful by far to look upon, with their dangling golden fruit, than the everlasting Virginia creeper, though not so generally satisfying to the eye as ivy, because not

evergreen like that ruin-loving plant. I have often wondered why the hop has not been more used than it has as a creeper; it is easily trained and very effective.

The interior of our inn did not belie its external promises; it was rambling, roomy, comfortable, clean and cosy—a combination of good qualities. Lamberhurst has no railway, and that fact may perhaps account for the excellence of its inn, for, as an almost universal rule, we have found that the farther from railways the better the hotel and the more reasonable the charges. Possibly the reason for this may be that, after a railway invades a place, in due time close to the station a brand-new building makes its appearance, yclept the Railway or the Station Hotel, and though in every respect it is inferior to the old-fashioned inn half a mile or more away in the town or village, still, as people are compelled to travel now by rail, its very proximity to this causes them to patronise it, and neglect the older and more comfortable hostel because so comparatively inconvenient of access. So now, as ever, inns follow the line of travel; in the old coaching days they stood at frequent intervals along the high roads, now they stand by the side of the iron way.

With the disappearance of the old-time hostelries nearly all the characteristic landlords have vanished: landlords not above their business, and who had always a ready smile of welcome wherewith to greet the new arrival; characters in their way every wit as much as the old ruddy-faced coach drivers—excellent specimens of the now almost ideal John

Bull. Portly as a rule, abounding in tact, with a good share of discretion and common sense, they received and treated their guests with a *bonhomie* that made them feel welcome and at home away from home:—

> To every guest th' appropriate speech was made,
> And every duty with distinction paid;
> Respectful, easy, pleasant, or polite,
> Your honour's servant, Mr. Smith, good-night.

Though, alas! countless numbers of these charming old inns, with their cheery landlords and good-natured motherly landladies, have been improved out of existence by modern progress—a backward sort of a progress, it appears to me—still, as we have found in this and other instances, many such still remain to us. In an article in the 'Century Magazine' for September 1884, entitled 'From Coventry to Chester on Wheels,' an American who took a cycling tour between those places thus writes in praise of the old English hostel. Of one rural inn early on his journey he says: 'I was received with as much kindness and was as sumptuously feasted as if I had been a prodigal son. . . . My experience was not exceptional. It was repeated almost daily. Indeed, it has not entered into the mind of man who has not known them to conceive the delights of English inns.' I may here state, though it is hardly necessary for me to do so, that these were country hostelries, and, great though the praise, it is none too great nor the less true.

In the coffee-room here we discovered amongst

other literature a county guide-book, and glancing over it to see if we might ascertain any particulars relating to Hawkhurst, we found that charming spot thus briefly dismissed: 'Hawkhurst, one of the most attractive parishes of the county, contains many gentlemen's residences. There are two fine churches here: one old, the other a modern building of great beauty. At Hawkhurst is an excellent inn.' I quote this as a fair sample of guide-book writing when describing picturesque spots that have not become famous. It will be noted that the two churches are mentioned: the ancient one, replete with interest, is passed over in just two words, the new one comes in for all the praise; and, above all (like the postscript to a lady's letter), we learn of the excellence of the inn. To the writer this seems to be the most important matter of all; and perhaps to the average healthy Briton it is, for does he not first think of providing for the inner man, and secondly of the scenery? I well remember, once upon a time, as the fairy stories have it, overhearing a discussion between two worthy Englishmen as to where they should go for the day. Two places were named, one possessing great scenic attractions, the other far less interesting, but having near to a renowned hotel; and they both agreed to go to the spot where they could get a good dinner—most naturally.

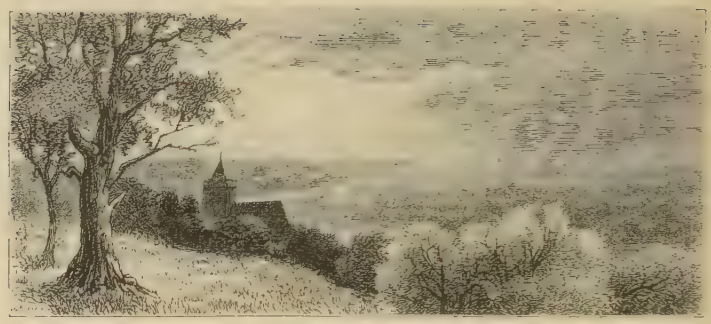
Lamberhurst, like Hawkhurst and other villages around, was in former times the seat of important ironworks. It was at a furnace a mile from here that the old railings round St. Paul's Cathedral were

cast. The village is built partly in Kent and partly in Sussex, on either banks of the little river Teise, that here divides the two counties—a river of whose existence we were not even before aware. In like manner, the Cuckmere and others we had come across during our outing were previously unknown to us. A driving tour is an excellent way of becoming better acquainted with the geography of one's own country.

The main road from London to Hastings passes through Lamberhurst, and so doubtless in the days of highway travel our inn was a busy and prosperous one; and though, like many other such, it appears no longer busy, its prosperity has not altogether departed with the mail coaches.

Rambling about the place, we noticed a sort of skeleton windmill raised high above some outbuildings. Prompted by curiosity to learn its use, we made our way to it. We found that the structure stood over the workshops of a carpenter and wheelwright. Coming upon the owner of this, we got into conversation with him. He informed us that his father had planned and erected the windmill, and said that he found it most useful to saw his timber and turn his lathes, doing this and other work at the small cost of a little attention and occasional oiling. I think in this country we hardly utilise wind power as much as we might; it is a little uncertain, truly, though not so much so as imagined if the situation be open, and it is the most economical of all power. In the Western States of America, and especially in California, I have noticed how much

windmills are employed for various purposes, and particularly at the different railroad stations (depots our Transatlantic cousins call them) to pump up a supply of water for the locomotives. Then the owner of the little windmill that had attracted us kindly asked us into his pleasant workshops, to show us how handy it was. Pleasant workshops I have said, for from their windows we could see green trees and patches of the far-away country. How different the prospect from the glimpse of blackened bricks and smoky chimneys of a town factory! 'Of course,' he said, 'we take advantage of the good weather to work the windmill' (for 'good,' breezy must be understood), 'and we arrange to do other jobs when the wind fails us. Of late years the trees around have grown very much, and in the summer-time when they are in leaf they cut off a good deal of our wind supply. If ever you build a windmill, sir, be sure there are no young trees growing up near.' And we said that we would be careful to remember his advice, should we by any chance build a windmill.



In the Weald of Kent

CHAPTER XIV.

A Chartless Cruise—A Railless Land - A Hilly Country—Kentish Roads—Goudhurst—An Elevated Village—Rural Superstitions—Haunted Houses—Old-fashioned Words An Inviting Hostelrie—A Chat in the Bar-room of 'mine Inn'—The finest Westeria in England—An old Timbered Farmhouse—Hawkhurst Place—Scenery 'hard to beat'—Sandhurst—A Wooden Village—Rolvenden—Towns far from Railways—A Restored and Plastered Church—Curious ancient Alms-box—Tenterden and its famous Steeple—The charm of our Rural Towns—How others see us—Deserted England!

About Lamberhurst the country is exceedingly beautiful and the scenery charmingly diversified. Hill and river, forest and tilled lands are in a delightful manner combined, though the wild predominates. We determined that for once we would put our maps and road-books safely away in the boot, and take just those roads that best pleased us, regardless to where they might lead, and thus we set out to explore the hilly country around—a new world to us. So, in a delightful state of expectancy and uncertainty of all that was before, with a mild though real sort of a Columbus spirit, we left our

comfortable quarters at Lamberhurst, and once more resumed our road rovings.

A magnificent drive we had that day, through a very hilly country—a country as innocent of railways as though a certain George Stephenson had never been born. A most interesting and little traversed portion of Kent this, one that well repays exploring, abounding, as it does, in wide views, in charming old-world red-tiled villages, hidden away amidst wooded hollows or standing boldly on the top of wind-blown uplands; in ancient churches, richly possessed of curious brasses and ancestral altar-tombs to brave men of a bygone age; in moated farmhouses, recalling the stormy days wherein they lived—pictures in architecture these, delightful both to artist and antiquary; and in many a snug hostelrie that our forefathers knew so well how to build and take their ease at—a land of good things.

A bit of real old England, much as it was long years ago, in passing through which we felt it difficult to realise that we were actually in the busy steam-driven nineteenth century, so peaceful and happily unprogressive it seemed: it was as though, by some magic, the hand of Time had been turned backward, or that we had reversed Rip Van Winkle's dream, and had been suddenly transported into the seventeenth century. In these days of cheap travel and rapid transit, when railways penetrate almost everywhere, it is a blessing to find some portion of our land that has successfully

resisted their levelling influences, and which retains the best characteristics of the vanished days of old —the poetry of a past civilisation.

Our road proved to be hilly, as most Kentish ones are, and this is about the hilliest portion of that county. It used to be said in the old coaching days that there was but one mile of level way between London and Dover. Goudhurst, the first village we came to, is situated upon high ground, in quite a highland country. From this elevated spot is a wonderfully extensive prospect around: the wooded landscape is dotted with numerous villages, each with its rural fane keeping watch and ward over the lowly homes below—indeed, their number is so great that we quite lost count of them; it was as though a little kingdom was spread out beneath us.

Goudhurst is a drowsy straggling sort of a place, interesting in itself for its quaint timbered houses, besides its revelation of magnificent distances; it possesses as well an old-world air of peacefulness—or dulness, if you will. In this remote corner of Kent forgotten customs, superstitions, and a firm belief in ghosts linger still, as any one travelling in these parts may discover for himself, if he be so minded. But, after all, there are other portions of England, even right in the hearts of the busy matter-of-fact manufacturing towns, that have not yet grown out of superstitious beliefs, in spite of steam-engines and the glare of electricity. Blackburn is certainly not a primitive place, yet I copied the following paragraph from the 'Observer' of January 30, 1887.

That such a notice should have appeared in a London paper speaks for itself, nor is this a solitary instance by any means. This is the extract :—

> Much consternation has been occasioned at Blackburn by a report that a ghost had been seen walking amongst the tombs in various churchyards and on the highways in the district. The spot mostly visited by this unearthly being is Mount Pleasant, and the people in that vicinity have during the past few days been sorely troubled. A certain man reports that he had seen the unwelcome visitant in Trinity Churchyard, and was so startled that he could neither run nor call for help.

Indeed, if you can manage to get into conversation with and gain the confidences of the rustics of our rural districts, you will find that, even in this enlightened age of School Boards and cheap literature, a strong belief in ghosts is still existent. A strange thing this inherent, far-spread, and lasting belief in apparitions. During our many different journeys in England and Wales it has fairly astonished us, the number of houses that we have come across reputed to be haunted, and that have stood tenantless for long years, though apparently desirable residences, solely on account of their ghostly reputation! This is a singular fact, and one that much impressed us. I may here state that most of these houses were really good buildings. One especially struck us, a fine old moated grange, with beautiful grounds, situated in a pleasant country, in which there is a demand for gentlemen's residences ; a charming old-fashioned home it appeared to us, and, moreover, we were informed that the owner would gladly let it for a nominal sum to insure its

being cared for, but no one would take it, though the place had been advertised in the papers and put into the hands of several agents. Are rustic people alone in their superstitious beliefs, I wonder? Is it more blameworthy to believe in haunted houses than in spirits knocking upon and turning tables, and such like freaks? which latter doings are firmly credited as supernatural by some educated people.

Chatting with the natives here, we noticed the old Saxon plural of 'en' frequently employed, especially in 'our housen' for 'our houses,' of which ancient use but few examples are left in our language—such as men, children, and oxen. We noticed, besides, other curious expressions and obsolete words spoken, that we deemed were only to be found in ancient volumes upon dusty shelves, so little has the language and local phrases of the people changed in all these changing times.

In Somersetshire, I may note as a strange fact, whilst taking a pedestrian tour through the county many years ago—more than I care to remember—talking about a railway collision with a man I met, he remarked to me, 'the trains collided'; and this was before that good old English word (for after hearing it I searched for and found the term in a book bearing date 1600) had been re-employed and re-naturalised from America. Indeed, many expressions I have heard whilst travelling in the States, which I then deemed of purely 'Yankee' origin, I have since discovered to be used by country people in remote districts of England, and in the northern portions

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more especially. It would seem to me that these had been taken over by the early settlers, and to have remained unchanged in the New World, whilst over here we modified our language, and fresh words and expressions amongst educated people grew and multiplied.

From Goudhurst we proceeded through a country bewitchingly beautiful, bound, as I have before stated, upon a chartless cruise, the unexpected result of which was that in the evening we found ourselves by some strange chance, after much delightful wandering, back again in an outlying portion of Hawkhurst known locally as Highgate. Here, by the roadside, with a pleasant garden in front, we came upon a most charming old-time hostelrie, long, low, and overgrown with creepers; indeed, at the first glance it looked more like a country gentleman's residence than a wayside inn, so that we almost passed it by for the moment, scarcely crediting that this snug retreat was actually a place of entertainment for travellers. It was the landlord's daughter who came out to receive us with a ready smile, and to give us the welcome information that we could have rooms, though, she added, 'had you come yesterday we could not have managed it, for we were full.' Luckily it was not yesterday, for what could be more provoking for a tired pilgrim than to be turned away from such enviable quarters?

Very pleasant was the low-ceilinged coffee-room of our inn; and during the course of the evening I found my way into the smoke-room, to see if I could discover any local Hawkhurstites indulging in a glass

and pipe, to listen to and if possible to join in their conversation, and thus learn something of their little world. I was fortunate enough in finding a few frequenters there, talking over their affairs and discussing various matters of interest. Amongst others, a farmer and his son were present: the farmer appeared to have had quite enough of the whisky that he was continually ordering. When I came in, I heard him remarking: 'I ordered four pen'orth of whisky, and as it was too little I ordered six pen'orth, and I'm blest if it is not less than the four pen'orth; now, that puzzles me.' This was said in a joking manner. His talk was rather incoherent, but of a good-natured sort: he 'meant no offence to any one —no, not he!—he only wanted everybody to enjoy his life and be as happy as he was.' Nevertheless, in spite of his good wishes, I was not sorry when, with a few boon companions, he took himself away, steering a somewhat erratic course out of the room, and left me alone there with a tradesman of the place. Of a communicative disposition we found this party, and indulged in a long chat with him. 'That man who has just left is a farmer,' he informed me; 'he enjoys his glass right well, always leaves market fresh—not drunk, that is, just jolly like. He's a good-hearted fellow.'

'I suppose,' I said, 'he neglects his farm?'

'Not a bit of it,' was the reply; 'he works hard all day, and then comes up here to enjoy himself of a night. Have I been here long? Well, as long as I've lived, and that's some years. It's just a century ago last June my grandfather came here. I

remember the old coaching days well: the men as drove the coach past here were Thomas Boaks and George Pedate; their line of country was from London to Rye. The bit of garden in front of the inn, with its well-grown shrubs and flower-beds, was then a wild rough green—many a day when I was a youngster have I played cricket upon it. Young men in these times are more particular than we were then—they must have a level field; I don't know, though, as they enjoys their games any the better.

'Are things not on a whole improved since I was young? No, sir, I can't say as how I think they have; it's much harder to get a living now than it was then. In the old times the gentry used to spend a good deal of money where they resided, now they gets all their things down from London; they only deal with us for small trifles or when pressed for something. It's not fair! How are we to pay rent and taxes if we gets no customers but the poor folk who haven't much to spend? I can remember in the past, when the travellers from the wholesale houses came round to collect money for goods, if any of us run a little short our neighbours would help us—we used to lend and borrow of one another; nowadays we try and cut each other out, the old friendly feeling has quite gone, and the world is in consequence not so good a place to live in—leastways, that's my opinion.

'Yes, times have altered altogether since I was a young man. I'm not sure that the railways have made us much better off: they have caused a keener competition. A man must work now all his life to barely live; he has no spare time to enjoy himself, till he is

too old, like myself, to do so, and so he keeps on the old groove because there's nothing else left for him. In my father's time the coaches used to pass our doors in the village, and put us down or pick us up there, and leave our packages in passing; now we have to drive some miles to the railway if we want to go anywhere, and then we cannot always get a fly to take us, and therefore have to tramp it. Perhaps we are exceptions to the rule, but the advantage of the many is the inconvenience of the few; it takes longer to get our goods delivered to our doors from town than it used to do. Of course, you will reply, we are rather out of the world, but there are many others like ourselves. It may be, had I been wise, I should have moved long ago, but it's hard to leave a spot where you have been born and brought up, and have all your friends. There used to be a fair held at Hawkhurst each year from 1277 till 1873, but that has been abolished. Since the fair has been done away with and the traffic has left the roads, there's not much life in these parts. It's a pretty country, as you say, a very pretty one, but one cannot live on scenery. But I see they are going to close up, so I wish you a very good night.' And thus our conversation ended.

Chatting with the landlord next morning outside his hotel, before leaving, he told us that the magnificent westeria that covered almost the whole side of the building was acknowledged to be the finest in England: so heavy were the branches that they had to be supported in places. It is not often one comes across such a pretty and picturesque inn as this, and

it was with great reluctance that we left; but if we were tempted to stop a few days at every inviting hostelrie we came across, I know not when our journey would have been completed.

We had not proceeded far on our way when, to the right of our road, we came upon an old timbered farmhouse, with the farmer leaning over the garden gate. As the house looked ancient and interesting, we pulled up, and wished him good-day. 'You live in a curious old place,' we remarked. 'It's all that,' he replied; 'the house has been built over three hundred years. Would you like to have a look inside?' Of course we replied that we should very much, and so we were shown over the interior. 'It used to be a much larger place than it is now,' he told us; 'it is only a portion of the old mansion that is left, and I've made a goodish many alterations since I came here myself, and those who had it afore me they made a few alterations too, so you cannot tell what like it was inside formerly.' Then he showed us into his drawing-room. This, it appeared, was a dairy when he came, so it was manifest the old building had seen some changes in its long life—he had it converted into a sitting-room. The ceiling was very low, and, as his landlord would not allow him to make any structural alterations to raise this, he lowered the floor—an idea of his own of which he seemed very proud. 'But with all I've done I don't much care for the old place; I likes new houses best.' 'Then, why did you not take a new house?' was our pertinent inquiry. 'Well, because I could not find one I liked as well as this,' was the rather

inconsistent reply. 'It's called Hawkhurst Place, and when it was all standing must have been a grand building. They do say as how Queen Elizabeth once stayed here. I've got a good farm along with it, and we have a London artist comes down to these parts now and again; he told me it was a beautiful country to paint, and so it is. I'm fond of scenery, and have been about a deal in my time, but I think this is the prettiest part of England, as far as I have seen. It would take a lot to beat it.' Then, as we left, he plucked a fine rose out of his well-kept garden, and gave it to us as a memento of our visit.

Shortly after leaving Hawkhurst Place we passed on our way the 'Oak and Ivy' public-house, beyond which we came to another modern one, built in the homely Sussex style, with its sign projecting from an old oak-tree in front. In years to come, when the walls of this structure have become toned by time and tinted by weather, and when its roof is bronzed and silvered with lichens, it will be quite a picturesque bit of building, and even perchance may become the subject for a picture of a twentieth-century artist.

Next we came to the little village of Sandhurst, remarkable only for the fact that most of its houses are built of wood, and, excepting that they are more picturesque and varied in design, and neater kept, it might almost pass for a 'township' in Western America. In the distance here we observed a windmill with five sails—a most unusual number, and for which peculiarity we could not account.

Down hill now we went for a change, then across a

low-lying marshy flat, up hill again after that—all in about a mile. You may be sure that whatever the Kentish roads do, they will not weary you by long stretches or dead levels. The country now became very beautiful. Passing a picturesque farm to the left, half hidden in foliage, with the conical roofs of oast-houses peeping forth here and there, to the right we drove alongside of a finely timbered park. The sun shining aslant down the grassy slopes between the trees made great lines of golden light—a beautiful effect.

At the top of a long rise we came to the village of Rolvenden. Here the church with its fine tower attracted us. The stonework of this we discovered had been stuccoed over, and the stucco was coming off in patchy pieces, leaving the original stones again exposed, and much better fitted to resist the weather than the paltry plaster. Poor old church! surely this was the last indignity, to stucco over your grey stone walls.

A picturesque place is Rolvenden, set on the top of a hill, with its solitary church spire a noticeable feature in the landscape. A place far from railways: by guess work from our map, the nearest, at Appledore, would be some ten hilly miles away. One noteworthy fact of this journey was the number of places, not inconsiderable in size, that we passed through distant thus from railways; this struck us as being a rather remarkable circumstance. There was Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst, Rolvenden, Tenterden (with a population of about 4,000), and others, far removed from the iron way. And I must confess,

as a consequence, the agreeable absence in all these places of stucco prosperity, pretentious gentility, speculative builders' mean cottages, ugly, cheap, and flimsy, made these railless towns and villages very gratifying to my eye—they have such a natural, unimproved look. Oddly built and quaintly old-fashioned they are. Each house that goes to comprise them impresses the traveller with its sturdy individuality; they have manifestly been designed and built for use and enjoyment, not for uniformity—not, as we do now, run up a score at a time all of a plan, and then people forced to fit into them, as a hermit-crab to a shell. Then they are so snug and compact, they possess no dreary spreading outskirts invading the pleasant green fields around them; they are much as they have been for generations past, delightfully complete and finished. Yes, that is their supreme charm, they are finished.

But I have been wandering away from the church. Entering it, we found—actually found the clerk within: this was an unexpected surprise, for this individual, according to our experience, is as difficult to discover as a policeman when wanted. Fixed upon the entrance wall we noticed an old carved-oak alms-box, literally black with age, with old-fashioned locks upon it, having wrought-iron clasps, the work of centuries past. The box was divided into three compartments, and above it was the following:—

NOTICE.

The Centre Hole is for the Poor.
The Right Hand Hole for Foreign Missions.
The Left Hand Hole for Home Missions.

Any one wishing his or her alms to go to any other purpose, had better wrap their money in a piece of paper with their directions on it, and these directions shall be attended to.

We put our alms into 'the Left Hand Hole,' as we thought that the heathen at home, who kick their wives and beat and starve their children, more in need of missions than the more civilised heathens abroad. Questioning the clerk about this box, he said that it had been discovered many years ago, when the church was restored, which restoration, as far as we could make out, consisted in plastering over the good honest stonework, and such like improvements—save the mark! The box, upon its discovery, was reinstated for its original purpose. Possibly this pleasing bit of carved-oak work was thrown away with other 'superstitious rubbish,' such as stained glass, miserere seats, and so forth, by the stern art-hating Puritans. We judged it was about the best thing that the restorers did, unearthing and replacing this on the church walls. A stone coffin lid was, we were told, discovered at the same time: this has been built into the side of the building for ornament! Two Early English lancet windows have also been discovered here by an archæologist who came to inspect the old pile, with a doorway cut through beneath, and two corresponding ones opposite; these had been built up and plastered over, like all else.

Next the clerk took us to a pew which had a staircase all to itself, with chairs and tables in it, furnished like a little room. Out of observation this, both of the pastor and congregation, so that the

occupiers could indulge in a sweet slumber during a dull sermon were they so minded, without any one being the wiser. Here our attention was called to an ancient brass let into the wall, with this simple inscription, which we had some difficulty in deciphering :—

St. Anne and St. Katerine.
MCCCCXLIIII.

As we were leaving, the clerk told us that the church was about to be restored again. Poor old church!

Then we drove on through a pleasant country, wide and open to the sun and wind. Our road led us along at a high elevation to Tenterden, associated by legend with the Earl of Goodwin's estate, once said to exist where the sea now washes over dangerous sands. Thousands of Englishmen who have never set foot in Tenterden know the place by repute, from the old Kentish tradition that it was the building of Tenterden steeple that caused the Goodwin Sands. The story that the money collected for keeping the sea-walls of the estate in repair was appropriated to building the church tower is too well known to need repeating here.

Just before entering Tenterden we passed a picturesque windmill, with the miller's house below, with another mill adjoining worked by water power, so that—lucky man!—he had 'two strings to his bow.' It could hardly be that both wind and water would fail him at one and the same time. On the outskirts of the town we noticed a very fine old red-brick mansion, which by date thereon we learnt was built in 1711.

This house pleased us much, because so simple and well proportioned, and because it is not a mere collection of features inharmoniously combined, such as modern architects so delight to give us. In the search for novelty we seem to have lost sight of the beauties of simplicity and happy proportion.

Tenterden is a pleasant old-fashioned town, neat and clean ; not a bustling place—possessed rather of an air of solid quiet prosperity that has neither cause nor wish to assert itself in plaster palace fronts and obtrusive plate glass. Here there is neither stucco nor modern builders' work to destroy the happy harmony of the time-toned houses and uncompetitive shops.

Of course we inspected its famous church and still more famous steeple : a grand bit of building, a great growth in stone, grey and battered with the storms of long years, chipped and crumbled here and there, made beautiful beyond the architect's conception by the bloom of centuries. Little did he dream when raising it that it would have the questionable, though unmerited, honour of being held responsible for an event that took place at an untold period before it was built !

It would be difficult to find a town more typical of old England of the coaching age than Tenterden. There still stand the ancient inns unaltered, the sunny street is much the same as when the last coach took its last change here. The town of a hundred years ago is the town of to-day, the past has glided into the present with an indifference to change that is very rare in this age of revolution. Some day, perhaps, a railway will find its way here, and then

the charm of Tenterden will be gone, and its pleasant picturesqueness will be lost in a growing prosperity. Only those who travel by road can appreciate the delight of coming thus unexpectedly upon such quaint old-world towns. A great peace seems to rest upon them, which is as far removed from dulness as a painting is from a photograph. An aroma of antiquity clings to the old walls of their houses; their buildings are low, so their streets are sunny; no commonplace commercial manufactories [illegible] over them and block out the bright sunlight, and pollute the air as well with sulphurous smoke.

One special characteristic of the towns of the south of England is their cheerful brightness, due not only to a clear smokeless atmosphere but in an equal measure to the lowness of their houses, which allows the sunlight free access to their streets. An old town that has become prosperous begets higher buildings in place of the old-fashioned two-storied ones; these obstruct both light and air—the streets are too narrow for the new order of things. The pleasing play of light and shade is wanting on the new edifices, they are out of proportion to their situation, and are, moreover, wearisome because of their monotonous unbroken sky-line. Thus it is our modern towns are so depressingly uninteresting and cheerless.

The height of buildings should be in relation to the width of the roadway—herein our cities all fail; this, with the addition of smoke-stained walls, makes a lover of the beautiful regret even their prosperity, which has robbed them to no small extent of their sunshine and brightness. A greater contrast than

coming directly from some sombre money-making manufacturing city to a sunny rural old-time town there could not be : the one is a disagreeable blot in the landscape, besides being ugliness itself ; the other appears quite a natural feature, and adds rather than detracts from the prospect—and of the latter pre-eminently is Tenterden.

We lamentably fail, in spite of our vaunted progress, in combining beauty with utility, as did the builders of old to a degree that is remarkable. In all that we do there is too much the feeling that 'good enough' will suffice—we fall far short of our best ; on the other hand, on looking upon the work of the ancient builders the diligent observer must be impressed by the fact that they built as well as they possibly could. So the few unimproved towns we still have left please us by the unpretentious honesty of their houses as well as their unstudied picturesqueness, which gratifies the beholder because it has so evidently come of itself, in the simple seeking first of all after man's convenience and requirements ; not a premeditated after addition, a sort of architecture *appliqué*, put on for the sake of ornament, which meaningless ornamentation by useless projections often obstructs the light, and profits nothing.

Many charming effects and happy irregularities are the result of this seeking to provide for internal requirements first of all things. When more space is wanted in an upper chamber, the higher story is projected forthwith above the lower ; where light is a necessity, an ample bay window is thrown out ; where a fireplace is needed, there the chimney is placed

accordingly—all regardless of any planned picturesqueness; and thus we have rows of buildings agreeably diversified, chimney-stacks standing out here and there, gabled roofs rising skywards, projecting upper stories, bay windows of various kinds and shapes, with endless recesses and odd nooks and corners—an incessant variety of detail that is so charming, an utter absence of any approach to slavish uniformity.

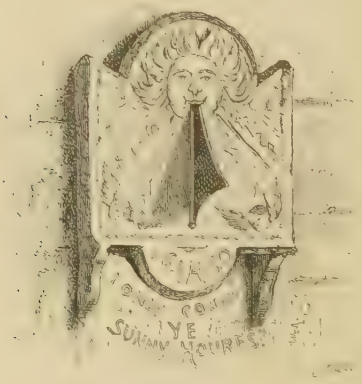
No two old towns the least resemble one another, they each possess their own special characteristics. Streets in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and other modern cities and towns of recent development are wanting in this pleasing individuality; they very much resemble one another, with their purposeless repeated rows of buildings, abounding in plate-glass and palatial fronts, supposed to be grand, but terribly uninteresting notwithstanding. But enough! 'comparisons are odious;' all people may not think as I do, and these past-time towns, with their age-mellowed quaintly irregular streets, whose houses all have made their little history, may not appear so charming to some as they do to me. Our old cities are gradually but surely being converted into new ones, whose only antiquity is their past records. It is our Transatlantic cousins, coming from a land where all is comparatively fresh, who, by the pleasing contrast, mostly appreciate the treasured store of beauties of our ancient edifices; and I cannot better conclude my remarks than by giving the very words of an American writer in respect thereof. Speaking of one of these old-time weather-tinted structures, he

enthusiastically remarks: 'Trust me that if we had a tithe of that lavish loveliness in one building in America, the beauty of that one would impoverish the effect of all the other structures on our continent.' Weighty words these; it is a good thing sometimes 'to see ourselves as others see us,' instructive too as well.

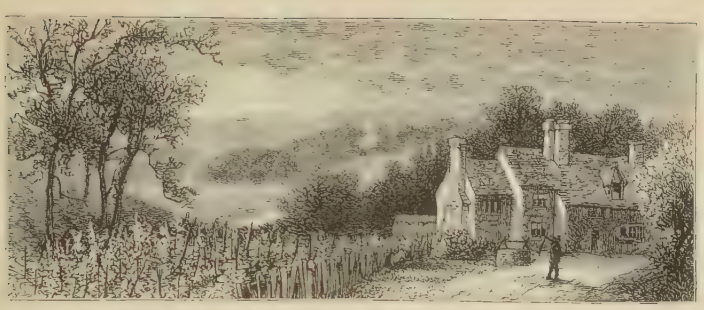
Truly it has been said: 'It has been left to our American cousins to value at their real worth the ancient edifices and inexhaustible beauties of the British Isles;' and it would be well if we who own them appreciated as we should the good things we possess.

Leaving Tenterden, the country, if possible, grew even more beautiful. A land it was of rural delights, of branching elms and pleasant hedgerows, with the greenest of meadows varied by golden cornfields, dotted with swallow-haunted farmsteads, with fat ricks around that suggested prosperity—varied further still by hill and valley, and here and there the shimmering of stilly water enlivened the changing prospects; backed all these fair English scenescapes by a tremulous distance of hazy uplands. A pleasant land, in truth, to wander through, but how deserted! For miles we met or saw no one, excepting now and again a labourer toiling in the fields; yet this very road must have been a busy one with traffic coming and going in the olden days. The pleasant highways of our forefathers are all untravelled and untrodden now, their margins are grass-grown, and the scenic revelations they afford are unknown and unheeded by the present railway-travelling generation. The

drowsy villages and picturesque roadside inns, the busy windmills and droning water-wheels, the grey old bridges and rustic cottage homes, are seen by few, though so charming to the eye of the town dweller. A gallery of Nature's pictures, free to all, and yet hardly seen by any; gems of home-like scenery, abounding in tranquil loveliness, and scarcely a soul to behold them. We had a kind of a feeling that it was selfish of us to have all these good things and enjoyment to ourselves. When will Englishmen learn what Linnæus calls 'the art of travelling in one's own land'? An English county is a little world in itself, well worth exploring if we did but know it: no Briton should travel abroad before he has seen at least his native shire, and to do this he must take to the highways and byways, on foot or driving, as may best please or suit him.



An Old Sundial



A Kentish Farmstead

CHAPTER XV.

Road Travelling—An Old-time Hostel—Great Chart—Curious Ancient Brasses—An Old Beau—Our Ancestors and their Wives—Ashford—The Picturesque Past *versus* the Prosaic Present—The Railway a thing of Beauty!—English Scenery: its Special Charms—The Cheap Tripper—A Road Monster—Willesborough—An English Farmstead—Farming Occupations—The Love of Nature a Recent Growth—Cottage Homes—A Lonely Inn—A Discovery—Westenhanger—Ready-made Histories—*Sic transit gloria mundi.*

A MAN must be hard to please indeed who, having fine weather and a lovely country like the heart of Kent to drive through, and having the opportunity and inclination to do so, could not be supremely happy and content with his lot; and so we felt that day. Surely, we thought to ourselves—as we had often thought during the course of our journey—surely it is impossible to imagine a more delightful method of travel than a driving tour: the pace is so pleasant, not too fast to miss anything of interest *en route*, nor yet too slow to be tedious; then a day's drive is full of pleasant surprises, varying incidents, and ever-changing scenes; above all, there is the simple enjoyment of driving for driving's

sake. Then one is master of one's own conveyance: he who drives by road can stop where he will and for as long as he pleases. Then the agreeable motion, the easy swing of a well-built carriage, is restful rather than fatiguing.

A phaeton is *par excellence* the carriage for road work: the seat is sufficiently high to afford an uninterrupted view all round, there is nothing in front of you to obstruct your prospect, and, the driver and his companion being placed well forward, there is a minimum of movement; indeed, the seat is as comfortable as that of an armchair—more so than many. Even the much-envied front place of a four-in-hand is in no way superior; it is slightly more elevated, truly, but what you gain in one way you lose in others. In a phaeton, whilst you are sufficiently raised to see over the hedges, you do not even miss a single wayside wild-flower and you can easily converse with a passing native or chance wayfarer without dismounting; and, besides, there are many who can afford the more humble conveyance who could never reasonably hope to be master of a coach—that must be left for the wealthy few. And one great charm about a driving tour is to be master of your conveyance, and with a sympathetic companion this is assured: two may be of one mind, but with a coaching party things may easily be on another footing; and, still again, a single or a pair of horses and a couple of travellers may be accommodated where the more luxurious four-in-hand and its increased number of travellers could not. As it was, we had often during our outing to plan and contrive

to get our horses quarters—more than once have we had to call a cowshed into requisition. Sometimes, indeed, we had to rough it as well as our animals; but we enjoyed the little roughing (if it was worthy of the name) we had—it is the salt that adds zest to such an excursion.

How often we pulled up that day to admire a view, explore a footpath, inspect an old house, visit a wayside church, or, it might be, to sketch some weather-worn bridge or roadside cottage, or to do whatever else took our fancy; again we halted by a stretch of inviting sward, and under the grateful shelter of overhanging trees indulged in a little picnic, so we were by no means confined to the phaeton the whole day long.

The special charm of this kind of touring is the real freedom it affords—a do-just-as-you-like sort of feeling; and, as I have before remarked, so little now are our rural roads traversed or frequented that there were few to observe our doings, even had we minded being observed. We might almost have been driving through a vast private park, so unmolested were we. In truth, this portion of Kent, with its undulating meadows of smooth greenery dotted with wide-branching elms, is one grand natural park, made beautiful by the careful husbandry of centuries. Go the wide world over, out of Britain, you cannot find the like. It is essentially an English landscape, seen under the most favourable conditions, for the skies of Kent are clear and pure, and the sun shines upon it through an unpolluted atmosphere.

Passing in a hollow a rambling farmstead, sur-

mounted by a quaint bell-turret—an ancient edifice that had probably been a manor house in its earlier and better days, its time-dimmed walls contrasting strangely with a windmill opposite that had been recently coated a glaring white—we came to the little hamlet of High Halden. Here we discovered a bit of pleasing old-time architecture, in the shape of a roadside inn, the happy work of builders long ago dead and forgotten. A humble unpretentious hostel it was, yet, for all, a veritable picture in brick and mortar, with a mighty gable roof, high pitched, extending the whole length of the structure, as high in itself as the walls thereof. There is always something, to me, very charming in these grand old roofs. They are mightily built, for there is an art in constructing these as well as the mere raising up of walls; and one cannot but admire the men who would build a remote country inn with such care and consideration.

We unpacked our camera in order to take a photograph of this uncommon bit of wayside architecture, and, as usually is the case under similar circumstances, some people whom we presumed belonged to the inn would come out and pose themselves right in front of the place, so that they might be included in the photograph. Of course they looked exactly as if they were standing to be taken, and utterly ruined the picture. However, we secured the old building, though with the unwelcome addition of two figures standing stiffly and seemingly ill at ease, looking straight forward, staring vacantly at nothing. I can never understand the intense desire

of people to be taken in a photograph which in all human probability they will never see. Such individuals are the *bête noire* of the long-suffering amateur photographer, who, unlike the painter, cannot ignore that which displeases him.

Then passing through a country perfectly idyllic, a scenic poem, doubly beautiful as we beheld it, softened and mellowed in the evening gloaming, we came to the pretty little village of Great Chart—great only in name now, though there is a tradition that in the Saxon days it was a considerable town. Here we noticed several quaint old cottages, with many gables, and having finely carved open oakwork thereon. Two of these bore date of 1583; and, strangely enough, farther on we found two others, evidently copied from the first we saw, with the much more recent date of 1853 inscribed upon them. These latter had already become time-toned and weather-tinted, and for a moment we imagined that there must have been some mistake in the date, and that they were built at the same period, the figures having somehow got transposed, being made up as they were of the same numerals. But a second glance showed us our mistake: the new work was more regular, and was possessed of less feeling than the old, though a well-intentioned copy.

Great Chart boasts of a fine Perpendicular church. Close to the entrance to the graveyard of this stands a curious old timbered cottage, looking as aged and worn as the sacred pile itself. The interior of this church contains some interesting brasses. Amongst others, there is one of 1499 to a certain William

Sharpe and his five wives ; another to Nicolas Toke, who, after burying five wives, was suddenly taken ill and died whilst upon a journey to London to wed a sixth, he being then of the ripe age of ninety-three. One thing we noted : according to these ancient records of departed humanity in many of our country churches, the men of times past seemed to have outlived their wives in a remarkable manner ; it is no uncommon circumstance to find, by tombstone inscriptions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the men of that period sleeping now beside their three former wives—and even four is not a rare number, and, as in the present instances, five are sometimes mentioned. Surely there is something strange in all this—these ancestors of ours and their numerous wives. Were the women of old shorter-lived than those of to-day, or how can this curious circumstance be accounted for ? Such records are rare on modern tomb memorials. Was it that the wives of the past were better than those of the present, that now when he loses his first partner a man does not rush eagerly after another ? No—a thousand times no ! I do not believe that. Wives—English wives—are as good and devoted now as ever they were ; and as we could not solve the enigma, we gave it up.

Shortly after this we reached Ashford, a great contrast to quiet, smokeless, clear-aired Tenterden, for here the railway company have established large works, and therefore the character of the place has changed to a considerable extent. Ashford is now a manufacturing town, no longer a peaceful country one, growing from this cause less beautiful every year,

though its old picturesqueness has not yet entirely vanished ; but new rows of houses of the character-less square-box order, with glazed holes for windows, are growing up around it, and, worse still, intruding into its old-fashioned streets. The beginning of the reign of ugliness has commenced, and once the un-beautiful puts her foot in anywhere, there, alas! she remains, and prospers exceedingly. In the race between beauty and ugliness, poor beauty invariably goes to the wall. Why is it that modern progress should be so destructive of the picturesque? The black sulphur-breathing locomotive has ousted the gay mail coach, and a shrieking steam-whistle now takes the place of the cheery horn ; the grand three-decker, in like manner, has given place to a floating iron monstrosity, terribly destructive and ungainly, manned rather by engineers than seamen ; the steam cultivator is but a poor exchange for the picturesque and poet-loved team of our forefathers ; the scientific silo also threatens in course of time to improve away the pleasant, fragrant hayfield. And so it ever is ; the latest additions to our civilisation are sure to be uglier than those that preceded them. But perhaps I may be told my premises are wrong : it is because I cannot see the beauty of the more recent develop-ments of our age, not that they are non-existent or of themselves uncomely ; for has not a member of Parliament—Mr. Labouchere—in a speech made in the House of Commons on February 17, 1887, defending the invasion of a portion of the lovely Lake District by a new railway, declared that : ' There is no foundation for the suggestion that the

railway would destroy the beauty of the scenery. . . . A railway in itself is a beautiful object. (Laughter.) I know nothing more pretty than the viaducts which one sees on the Corniche and St. Gothard. . . . The more railways the better.' Still, for all this saying, I maintain that railways do terribly spoil scenery. A rich man can walk in his park, even a man of moderate means may have his garden to roam about in, but the poor man's sole park and garden is the country. It is a pity to destroy beyond recall the few remaining beauty spots still left to us with embankments, tunnels, scarred cuttings, iron bridges, signal and long lines of telegraph posts, and other unsightly matters pertaining to the iron way. By all means let us have railways for through communication, or where the traffic demands them, but give a little quarter to the sylvan scenery of old England—let us be able to get to some spot out of sight and sound of the iron monster.

English scenery belongs to the whole people, not specially to promoters, engineers, shareholders, and contractors, and its restful quiet is more easily destroyed than that of other lands. Our picturesque holiday spots are none too many, and a railway ever brings down excursionists of the rougher care-for-nothing sort into the very heart of their peaceful loveliness: excursionists who dig up ferns, uproot wild flowers and then throw them away in a wholesale manner, break down branches of trees, and leave everywhere behind them traces of their past presence in the shape of broken débris of bottles and litter of various kinds; besides all of which their shouts and

noisy (not merry) laughter strike a chord wholly out of harmony with the quiet scenes they so ruthlessly invade. In these days of cheap travel man and his handiwork meet us on almost every hand; only the sea and sky are beyond his power to change or spoil, and even the latter he has managed to obscure with smoke in his big cities.

From Ashford we drove to Folkestone, not for the sake of visiting that fashionable watering-place, but to see friends there; and though modern Folkestone was not suited to our tastes after the rural scenes, old-fashioned unsophisticated towns and villages, with their characteristic inhabitants, we had been delighting in, still the drive there was a most interesting one.

We had not proceeded far on our stage when we met one of those rare blessings of our advanced civilisation, a road monster breathing forth fire, steam, and smoke, snorting as it crawled along like some dreaded devastating dragon of children's fairy tales, the nineteenth-century fiend being none other but a traction engine. Verily this is about the most hideous machine that the inventive genius of man has as yet contrived—a most dangerous one, besides, to timid riders or nervous drivers of spirited horses. Doubtless in years to come, though, man's wonderful and fertile brain will improve upon it, and produce something more uncouth still. Even the black locomotive is picturesque beside the misshapen, noisome, fussy iron monster, which monopolises the most of the roadway; the locomotive at any rate possesses the desirable qualification of confining itself to its

own special track—you are not forced to a close and unwelcome acquaintance against your will.

An old traveller by road once told me, that what most he dreaded meeting when driving with spirited horses in the olden time was a mail coach galloping down hill, with the horn blowing and the dust flying. 'But,' he grimly added, 'I have lived to see something far more to be dreaded, a something that was never then conceived by the most fervid imagination —a traction engine, to wit.' Truly so, my friend; the worse misfortune that such things should be.

The special iron fiend before-mentioned came snorting and puffing right along the centre of the road, and actually forced us into the ditch, reminding us of our good friend Mr. Punch's van driver, who exclaims haughtily to an unfortunate 'cabby' he has compelled to take to the gutter, and who naturally remonstrates against the proceeding: 'I knows nothing about no right sides nor wrong sides. You get out of the way if you don't want to be made a wafer on.' So the weakest has to go to the wall, or the ditch, as the case may be; and as our poor phaeton would have stood no chance in an encounter with the ironclad monster, and as we did not want 'to be made a wafer on,' to the ditch we went as the only other alternative, nearly upsetting the carriage in so doing. Even then it was a close shave, but the traction-engine driver merely smiled pleasantly when we ventured to expostulate. Such experiences are doubtless amusing to him, for, happen what may, *he* cannot come to harm.

Still, as the roads are free to all, or at least are

supposed to be, it hardly seems exactly fair that one or two individuals, to save a few paltry pence per ton in the conveyance of goods, should be allowed thus to monopolise the best parts of our roads, let alone the danger and annoyance to the owners of horses and the damage they cause to the roadway. That these iron monsters are not generally beloved we were pleased to find by several notices attached to various bridges, to the effect that no traction engine was allowed to cross them, the excuse being that the said bridges were not equal to bear their weight, though they certainly appeared to the casual observer amply strong enough ; and at one or two wayside ponds we observed a board with a warning that 'no traction engine would be allowed to draw water therefrom.' Now, as the mere fact of taking a little water from a dirty pond, utilised for no purpose, could do no harm to any one, it was manifest that the prohibition was aimed solely as a protest against these road nuisances. So, after all, traction engines do not have it quite their own way, bound in by bridges, and therefore restricted to certain portions of the road, forbidden to replenish with water on the journey ; still, where they do make use of the highway, they tyrannise over all other travellers, and, though they may add to the profits of the very few, they detract greatly from the pleasures of the many. Even 'Punch's' imperious van driver would have to give place to them. But enough ! we came out solely to enjoy ourselves, to spend a holiday free from worry of all kinds, and we determined we would not let such a trifle as two minutes' encounter

with a traction engine annoy us, though we did get the worst of it, as far as having to take to the ditch. *Carpe Diem* was our motto, and a very excellent one it is, too, for the traveller.

The picturesque hamlet of Willesborough was the first place we passed through after leaving Ashford. From near there we noticed in the distance a curious steeple of quaintly original design, an uncommon bit of building, difficult to describe in words. To what village church it belonged we could only roughly, and possibly wrongly, guess, from its direction and our maps. We much regretted afterwards that we did not steer our course towards it, for we instinctively felt the détour would well have rewarded us. But we knew not how many miles away it might be, and cross-country lanes are winding, seemingly never ending, leading everywhere and to nowhere in particular; often when you trust yourself to them, hoping to reach a certain distant point, after enticing you along hopefully for a few miles, you find to your dismay that you are actually travelling away from your would-be destination. And in the present case we had the further disadvantage of not even knowing the name of the village we should be in quest of, so that we could not ask our way; and, moreover, the most important thing of all—in reality the one circumstance that prevented us doing a little exploring—we had friends expecting us that evening at Folkestone. This fact decided us; for we had a sufficiently long stage as it was, and, had we lost ourselves in the mazes of the cross-country byways, our friends might have expected us that night in

vain. All of which only goes to prove how unwise it is to be tempted into making any definite arrangements when on a driving tour. If you have friends upon your line of route, it is better to take your chance of finding them at home than to bind yourself in any manner; besides, it may chance that whilst on a journey you change your mind as to your course. As surely as ever you bind yourself in a weak moment, so surely afterwards you will heartily wish that you had not been so foolish, for it always happens on such occasions that something occurs to make you repent of your temporary loss of freedom. So it was in this case. There is always a great attraction about the unknown—all sorts of possibilities suggest themselves; probably the reality, as a rule, falls sadly short of the fancied ideal; but do we not frequently feel when on a tour that those things we miss are the best worth seeing? And therefore it was that a vague sensation came over us that we might have come across something of great interest in that quaint old church, hidden away in a remote and little visited corner of the land, and we were out of humour with ourselves accordingly.

Driving on through a country hilly and well wooded, we came at length to an old farmstead, surrounded by grand barns, oast-houses, and a chaos of sheds, wagon-shelters, stabling, and granaries, their roofs, bent with age but strong still, moss-grown and lichen-stained all, with green grasses growing, besides, from between the tiles every here and there. The favourite resting-place of pigeons these spacious roofs, beloved of sparrows and haunted

by swallows. Quite a colony of buildings, grouped about in a happy, haphazard sort of manner, yet not purposeless; they are the picturesque outcome of the various and changing requirements of generations of farmers. Those mighty barns, with their great doors, that look as though they would house a regiment of cavalry, are never built now, the steam thrashing-machine doing the work quickly out of doors that was done upon wet days in their roomy, sheltered interiors. I wonder is there any group of buildings in the world so eye-pleasing as an old English farmstead? A ruined abbey may be more beautiful, but is scarcely so picturesque. The surroundings and belongings of a farmhouse, too, how pleasant they are! They raise in the mind delightful thoughts, and suggest peaceful, healthful occupations. As we sat down quietly to sketch this ancient steading, there came to us a mingled odour of sweet hay, of newly milked cows, the delightful scent of freshly cut clover, recalling the happy days of youth spent in a country house. Then the sounds that belong to a farmyard, how musically they strike the ear of one for long months accustomed to the ceaseless and nerve-irritating din of cities: the lowing of kine, the cackling of geese and hens, the bleating of sheep, the far-off bark of the shepherd's dog away yonder in the fields, softened by distance, and the constant neighing of horses.

Farming occupations are above all others restful and soothing to look upon. How they charm us in pictures!—the slow crawling of the harvest team, gathering the sheaves as it moves lazily along; the

haymakers in the meadows—the very poetry of labour ; the reapers in the cornfields, the ripe yellow crop waving round them like a golden sea ; and after them the picturesque gleaners come, beloved of artists, and yet happily not wholly extinct. For over three thousand eventful years have the gleaners gathered the remnant of the harvest fields ; but soon we shall lose them for ever—another pictorial feature of country life promises speedily to vanish, and to live only in memory, for the scientific reaping-machine, that does its work so well, makes their task a fruitless one. Then there is the sheep-shearing, the ploughman behind his slow-travelling team turning up the red soil, and all the other numerous and ever-changing proceedings, varying as the months progress. It is a perpetual delight to watch all these, they never weary or fail to interest the observer. There is no hurry or bustle about the goings on of a farm—there is something idyllic and eminently peace-bestowing in watching the doings of the rustic toilers ; they are picturesque objects in themselves, and their surroundings are healthful, pleasant, and beautiful.

To the left of this farmstead the land dropped down, and in a wooded hollow nestled a little village, half drowned in luxuriant foliage ; a sparkling silvery stream crossed by a grey old bridge, and swelling hills beyond, completed a rural picture as charming as the eye of artist ever gazed upon. How curious the fact that, for ages past, painters never thought of giving us the simple beauty of the green earth and changeful sky for the sake of their

charms alone—merely as a background for their pictures did they consider these. Now our eyes are opened, and we love the landscape for its own sake. Scott and Wordsworth, by their poems and writings, have had much to do with our modern appreciation of the beauties of Nature; then came the prose word-painting of Ruskin, and a new revelation was given to us. Even in our novels now we demand faithful and studied descriptions of scenery—descriptions that our forefathers would not have had the patience to read, much less enjoy; and it is well it is so. A new pleasure is brought to all the rich as well as the poor, and one that is inexhaustible, for though the wealthy few may own the land, scenery is the special property of none. Landscape, seascape, and cloud-scape, how each and all abound in endless beauties and untold loveliness! and the love of Nature, once acquired, is a lasting one. The English landscape, with its soft clouded skies, its mellowed prospects, its colourful distances, how bewitchingly beautiful it is! for a moist climate is the most charming of all. Our insular atmosphere has a special quality about it a drier one never can possess: we view the near and far distance through a space of reflective moisture-laden air, which has the same quality in relation to scenery that wet has to a pebble—it brings its colours out, besides softening and tenderly harmonising all things. An English mountain ten miles off looks as far away—it is not outlined unpictorially sharp against the sky, with details all disagreeably clear and pronounced—as though it were only a mile or so removed from the spectator, save, of course, for

ON THE BORDERS OF KENT AND SUSSEX.

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size. For this climatic cause, in sketching in California nothing worried me so much as the apparent nearness of the distance ; it would not stand back, it so asserted itself as to destroy all feeling of space. Nature there is in an intensely pre-Raphaelite mood.

A few miles farther on our road a wayside cottage, more roof than wall, attracted our attention, and by a painted board upon it we learnt that it was Smeeth post-office. Though merely a cottage, it was mightily built, its red-tiled roof reaching on either side to within a few feet of the ground, a great chimney going up the centre ; the upper projecting story was weather-tiled, creepers grew on the walls, and homely old-fashioned flowers flourished in the little garden in front—altogether a cottage of a kind to be found only in southern England.

What a feature the builders of old made of their roofs! These in their structures always strike you first, next the chimneys, then, last of all, the body of the building. These grand old high-pitched roofs have, however, one objection, if objection it can be rightly termed, and this is that the chimneys must be built in the centre or wreathed in a number together for mutual strength and support, otherwise the height of a single one, if coming from an outer wall, causes it to be weak and unfitted to withstand in safety a strong storm of wind, and all good building must first of all be strong. The men of old never made this mistake, but modern alterations have frequently been made and chimneys thus thoughtlessly added. So, we noticed, it had been in this case, and the wrong construction had evidently given way at

some time, for we observed that a comparatively recent chimney had been formed, built from the stump of the old single stack, following along the line of the roof to the top, creeping upward snakelike fashion in a curious manner; and this was by no means a single instance of the kind we had observed, all due to the want of knowledge of sound construction of those who had added to or altered these old structures in recent times. In larger buildings this position of chimneys is of no import, as the greater number required causes them to be grouped together, and, whilst for this very reason forming a pleasing architectural feature, they have ample strength.

The ancient cottage homes of England, the home of the body of the people, are an interesting study: in these, naturally, the handiest and least expensive materials were employed, so they are more than all others characteristic of the locality in which they exist. In the north, where stone was plentiful and wood scarce, their walls wholly consist of this material, unhewn, rough, and strong; in other parts of the country, where wood was abundant and stone not to be had, they were mainly constructed of framed timbers, the spaces between being filled in with bricks or rubble, their roofs were of tiles, thatch, or of thin slabs of stone, never by any chance of cheerless slate. These cottage homes were necessarily humble, but never, like those of our day, pitifully mean; and one thing about them should be remembered—they have not suffered by sieges or ancient feuds like their more ambitious brethren, and so remain much as when first built. As we drove

on, we kept looking out for an inn where we might rest and bait our horses, for so far we had not observed any ; it seemed to us to be an innless land we were passing through. Just as we began seriously to doubt whether such a thing as an hostel existed on our way at all, we came suddenly and unexpectedly upon one at the junction of four roads, and, moreover—a very welcome moreover—it had stabling attached. Possibly, we imagined, in the old coaching days this had been a thriving and busy establishment, but now it appeared sadly forsaken and desolate ; manifestly it had seen better days.

Dismounting here, we found that the door was actually locked, and we were obliged to ring and wait before we could gain admission. Next we discovered that there was no ostler, though this fact hardly surprised us ; however, we were informed that we were welcome to put our horses in the stable if we could manage to unharness them without assistance, as they had none to give us. So I set to work to help my man, and soon we had our animals safely installed in the little-used outbuilding. It is well on such a journey—almost a necessity, indeed, besides the pleasure of the thing—to be able to see after the requirements of your horses yourself in case of need, which will now and then arise. Truly, we had no reason to complain of the absence of that much and unjustly abused, but most useful, individual, the ostler; in such a spot, where travellers were few and far between, it could not be expected that a remote and lonely wayside inn like this should support one—in fact, how it supported itself was a puzzle to us. These coun-

try inns, away from towns and villages, without even the little help of summer tourists, fishermen, or artists that some of the solitary hostelries in the less frequented portions of Wales, Yorkshire, and other regions of scenic attractions and trout-haunted streams have, how they exist at all has always been to me a mystery. Now and then a passing farmer may pull up and indulge in a glass, a wagoner, carrier, or a stray wayfarer may do the same, and in the evenings a few farm labourers may gather together in the tap-room for the same purpose, but such customers cannot be very profitable—even were the collective sum they expend all net gain, it seems to me that it would not as much as pay the rent; and yet the fact is self-evident that these roadside inns do manage somehow to exist, and would moreover, strange to say, even seem to prosper to a certain extent. Upon one of these lonely hostels in the Fen district is inscribed, 'FIVE MILES FROM ANYWHERE. NO HURRY'; and we thought this inscription might have been written with equal truth on the walls of our inn—it would have been quite as appropriate.

But, withal, both ourselves and horses fared exceedingly well here: we were shown into an upper room, not uncomfortably furnished, and informed, to our great surprise, that we could have a dinner in an hour's time. Had we been told that the mail coach had just arrived from London, we could hardly have been more surprised, but 'it is always the unexpected that happens.' We had quite made up our minds to be content with the inevitable never-failing ham and eggs, or, failing this, to make our meal of bread and

cheese and ale, which even the poorest 'public' may be relied upon to supply.

As we should have an hour or so to wait, we determined to spend it by taking a look at the country near at hand, as the fresh air and sweet summer sunshine, combined with the charming rural scenery, were far more attractive to us than the stuffy room—stuffy not so much from the smallness of its size, for it was of fair proportions, but because (as is the most universal rule with country people, who seem to have an inveterate prejudice against fresh air) the windows were all kept religiously shut; and who can tell when they had last been opened? Perhaps the rural folk find the supply of fresh air out of doors sufficient for them, and need none within. However that may be, the fact remains, that nine out of every ten cottages you pass (in saying this I believe I am under rather than over the mark), you will discover, if you observe such things, have their windows all carefully closed, and if one of the tiny diamond panes is by any chance broken, that too will be carefully plastered over.

Looking around, we discerned in the valley, about a mile away, what appeared to be the ruins of an old castle—a dark spot in the bright sunlit landscape. As this offered an object for a walk, besides the chance of discovering something of interest, thither we wended our way. Meeting a rustic youth, we asked him the name of the place. 'Westenhanger' was the laconic rejoinder. 'Is it a castle?' we next demanded. 'Noa, it's a farmhouse.' 'Can we get to it across the fields?' 'Yes.' So we proceeded

on our way, but little the wiser for our questioning, determining to find out the facts for ourselves, for, unless our eyes deceived us, the building was something more than a mere farmhouse.

Nearing the old pile, there could be no doubt that portions of the structure had formerly been a stronghold of some kind: there, still standing, were the crumbling curtain walls, and three flanking towers in a fair state of preservation; then, as we came close to it, we discovered there was likewise a moat, nearly dried up, but with water yet in places. Within the time-worn walls a large and comfortable-looking farmhouse had been built, portions of it being incorporated with the ancient structure, and in the space enclosed by the moat were also a collection of rambling outbuildings, judging from the extent of which we concluded that the old castle must have been of considerable size in its day, though it does not appear to have made a name for itself in history, and the very fact that such a castle ever existed is possibly now known to few except antiquaries learned in such relics of the past. At any rate, we had never heard of Westenhanger before that day, so the place came upon us as a delightful surprise; besides, we had the pleasurable feeling and pride in having made a discovery—we took, therefore, a double interest in the place. All of which goes to show how little even those who travel much in their own country know of it.

So sure did we feel that this interesting old pile must have been of more than ordinary importance in its day, possessing something of a history worthy

of record, if we could only unearth it, that upon our return home we searched with pleasurable trouble through several ancient archæological works and sundry dusty tomes, historical and otherwise, some of which we hunted up at certain much-frequented old bookstalls, and in this wise we discovered many interesting particulars concerning Westenhanger. It appears that it was once a royal demesne, it having belonged to Henry VIII. The fee of the manor seems to have continued vested in the Crown for a considerable period, for in Strype's 'Annals' it is recorded that 'Queen Elizabeth, during her progress through Kent in the year 1573, stayed at her own house of Westenhanger.' In the reign of Richard I. it was the manorial residence of Sir William de Auberville. Male issue failing, it was conveyed by marriage of his heiress to the Criols, one of whom, Sir Bertram, was Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in the time of Henry III. Another member of this family, Sir Thomas, was killed at the battle of St. Albans. According to an old Kentish historian, John Philipott, 'In the seventeenth of Edward the third, John de Criol had a grant from the Crown, permitting him to embattle and make loop-holes in his mansion-house at Westenhanger, and two years afterwards, he had license to found a chantry in the Chapel of St. John's in his parish.' Quoting again from the same authority, we learn that 'In the twenty seventh of her reign, Elizabeth granted this Manor with its appurtenances . . . to Thomas Smith Esquire, a well-known farmer of the Port of London, who resided here and much enhanced the beauty of

the fabrick, which had been empaired and defaced with fire, by magnificent additions.' After this the estate appears to have passed through several hands, and eventually, we find, so grand and extensive was the mansion, that the keeping up such an expensive establishment brought more than one owner into difficulties, the most unfortunate result being that in the end the fine historic structure was actually pulled down and the materials sold. A Goth-like way of settling a difficulty this, surely.

After all of which it will be interesting to learn what Westenhanger was like in the heyday of its prosperity. This, then, is how we found it described in an old work: 'A seat of ancient grandeur. . . . The walls are both very high and of great thickness, the whole of them are embattled, and strengthened and fortified by nine massive towers, alternately round and square, having a gallery going throughout the whole from one to the other. It has a drawbridge, a gatehouse, and a portal, the arch of which is wide and strong; this springs from six polygonal pillars, and possesses a portcullis. One of the towers, with an adjoining gallery 160 feet long, is called the Prison and Gallery of Fair Rosamond.' It would seem by this that there was some tradition connecting that frail beauty with this place. Then the old account goes on to say: 'In the mansion itself [over the entrance to which is a statue of St. George on horseback] are 126 chambers. The Hall is fifty feet long, and thirty-two wide, having a music gallery at one end, and a cloister at the other, which leads to the Chapel; this was built by Sir Edward Poynings, as

appears by an inscription in the French language, inscribed on two stones, and ornamented with statues of St. Anthony, St. Christopher, and others. The court within the great gate is 130 feet square, and in the middle of it is a fine fountain.' The description of the fine old castellated mansion continues on, but I think I have quoted enough to show what a grand place it must have been, rivalling, it would appear to me, some of the most renowned seats in England. What a terrible pity it is that such a stately manorial residence, possessing both historic and traditional associations, should have been pulled down by the hand of man, and that all that remains of its former great glory should be three ruined towers and crumbling outer walls!

We wandered about the old ruins unmolested, for this is not a tourist-besieged spot, consequently there is no guide with his ready-made-up stories, that do duty so frequently for facts. But, after all, it is hardly fair to blame the characteristic race of guides: they are but human, and if people who pay their money to see show places will have histories connected with them, well, their wants are duly provided. Such is the inevitable result of the law of supply and demand.

During the course of our explorations the farmer who now occupies the place came out—a stout, jovial-looking individual, 'Punch's' John Bull personified. He bid us 'Good-day' by way of breaking the ice, after which we had a pleasant chat with him about the crops, the lowness of prices of agricultural produce, the present bad and the past

good times, together with the never-failing topic of weather.

Glancing over the ivy-covered walls and farm-buildings, to see if we could discover any remnants of carved work, or perchance a date (for we concluded that it was not improbable some of the old stones of the demolished portion of the castle had been employed in the later structures), we came upon a small dilapidated Gothic arch, once evidently a little gem, now much weathered and worn, but still retaining some traces of its former gracefulness—and this we discovered led to a pigstye! From the style of architecture and the class of workmanship we deemed that in all probability this old arch had in times past been a portion of a chapel, or perhaps of 'my lady's chamber.' A place for worship, or a room where fair dames of high degree in olden days resorted, now the mean abode of unclean swine. Truly both great and strange are the changes time brings about! A regal residence once, now its courts, trodden of old by gallant lords and stately ladies, are the home of the common kine, its crumbling, defenceless walls and dried-up moat serve but to enclose a lowly farmstead! The pomp and splendour of its past is a forgotten story. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

The Last Gleam

CHAPTER XVI.

Hythe—Sleepy Sandgate—Folkestone—Dover Castle—Old Roman Work—Upland Silence—St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe—Old Norman Church—Modern Smuggling—Country Byways—A New Railway—Lyminge—Kentish Farms—Elham—Old Houses—Jokes in Wood and Enigmas in Stone—Dorringstone—The Restorer in his Glory.

Leaving the solitary wayside inn, we drove on through a pleasant country, and after a time straight ahead of us we caught sight of a long gleaming line of white. We were once more nearing the sea: our position, high on an elevated upland, caused the ocean horizon to be high before us. Beyond the white line were a series of cloud-mountains; lighted up by the low-lying sun, they looked like a veritable chain of Alpine peaks, causing the sea to resemble a lake. The effect was very fine. Had we been actually looking upon snow-clad mountains, the prospect could hardly have been grander in a scenic sense; indeed, the deception was most complete, more like the reality than the original itself, as an Irishman might say.

A long descent brought us to Hythe, a cross between a military station and a watering-place. Shortly after this we found ourselves driving through the quaint old street of sleepy Sandgate, and soon we arrived at Folkestone—a charming health resort doubtless, but the roving Bohemian sort of life we had been leading had quite spoilt us for fashionable towns.

From Folkestone we drove to St. Margaret's Bay and back—a grand marine drive. Out of Folkestone, collar-work commenced at once: hard continuous climbing it was—that is, far more fatiguing to horses than double the distance of equally hilly but give-and-take ground. However, at length we reached the top of the cliffs, and were well rewarded for our toilsome ascent by a most glorious sea prospect. A delightfully breezy, bracing stage we had along the high and comparatively level ground. A grand marine panorama was spread out beneath us: a vast extent of foam-flecked and ship-dotted waters, bounded on the horizon by the fair land of France, a tender varying outline of hazy grey.

How abruptly here the land ends! A fertile, rolling country, cultivated and grass-grown to the last inch, comes to a sudden termination, taking, as it were, a leap into space. Were the sea hidden by mist, a traveller might almost imagine that he had come to the actual end of the world. The cliffs here are high, the unsheltered land wind-swept from all quarters, the air fresh, pure, and bracing to a degree; it was a rare luxury simply to breathe the

light tonic-giving atmosphere. We were indulged in a regular air-bath.

There is one thing about our little island : everywhere around it we have grand seascapes, which by their low level afford fine cloudscapes as well, and, however the air of our smoke-shrouded towns may be polluted, we have ever within easy reach the fresh ocean breezes ; these we can never be robbed of, for man cannot build upon the sea, nor destroy its ozone-laden health-restoring air. Man has conquered the land—the ocean defies him ; as it was countless ages ago so is it now, unchangeable though so abounding in change. We may be thankful that there is some portion of the earth beyond his powers to alter. The sea may be his friend or his foe, but never his slave.

Presently the stern, weather-beaten old Norman keep of Dover Castle came into sight. The bright sky above, the sparkling sea beneath, and the sun-lit landscape around only seemed to emphasise the dark grey century-gathered gloom of the ancient donjon tower. Below clustered the irregular town of Dover, half hidden by the haze of its own smoke, looking to us from our distant standpoint, without great strain upon the imagination, much as though it were a mediæval town with the frowning fortress keeping watch and guard over it. Older than even the Norman keep is the Pharos of the Romans that stands upon the castled height, a most interesting relic of their stay in the land. The form of this is uncommon, being octagonal without and square within ; it was probably employed by them

as a lighthouse or watch-tower, or possibly used for both combined. Until recent times this had been carefully preserved, but though one of the finest, if not the very finest, specimens of Roman architecture we possess, the lead covering has been removed, thus hastening its decay. This act of vandalism has caused an American writer, J. F. Hunnewell, in a recent work, 'England's Chronicle in Stone,' to remark: 'Yet certain of the English criticise their neighbours who retop and point their ancient works, and modestly talk about the historical shams of France.' I am afraid we deserve the taunt; it is surely better far to retop and repoint than to take away. And the worst of it is, once mouldered into ruin, we can never really restore an old building—we may repair and reface it, but then too late; the new stones are not the old ones, fraught with the antiquity of ages, with the very strokes of the ancient masons' chisels upon them. No reproduction can give us back the bloom and weather stains of a thousand years, the flavour of antiquity, or, most precious of all, the chiselling of the hoary craftsman of old, the very marks made by his hand—a record of the past written in stone, turning walls into histories, and buildings into romances! We drove along through a rolling country, up and down, with prospects of vast undulating ridges of chalk, green with grass and golden with waving cornfields, over which great cloud shadows and mighty gleams of sunlight came and went in endless succession and silent motion. A sense of stillness and a feeling of space all this gave to us. The dome of blue above,

with its countless cloud-islands and continents of vapour, boundless in extent; around us the space-softened distance, growing bluer and bluer till lost in a dim far-off mystery; below, the gleaming sea, and beyond this the shadowy outlines of a foreign land, stretching dreamily away till it was impossible to tell which was earth and which was sky. Great is the spell of silence on these uplands; the crunching of the phaeton wheels and the clatter of our horses' hoofs seemed strangely loud, because there were no other sounds—a silence that might almost disgust a hermit and make him wish for company.

At length we came in sight of the South Foreland lighthouses, shortly after which we found ourselves in the quiet hamlet of St. Margaret-at-Cliffe, a little village with a remarkably fine and large old church. The tower of this was formerly ornamented with a turret at each corner, but one of them having fallen down in the year 1711, the others were removed to make the whole uniform, it being found less costly to demolish the three others than to erect a fresh turret in place of the fallen one. Thus are our old buildings improved by piecemeal away! On the walls of this we observed a painted board, with a notice thereon that 'the keys of this very interesting old Norman church are to be had at' &c. Generally we have found a great difficulty in discovering the clerk and gaining admission to the country churches we came across. First we had to ask some one who the clerk was and where he lived, then we had to hunt up that individual, who seldom by any chance was at home. Here, however,

the clerk proclaims himself, and actually aids the traveller in his search—quite a new experience to us. As a specimen of the massive and enduring Norman work, with its substantial pillars and semicircular arches (a strong and gloomy style, in keeping with the troublous times), this church is well worth a visit.

Then driving on, we came to St. Margaret's Bay, a little ravine in the mighty chalk hills, giving access to the sea. Here we found a new hotel, built in the so-called Queen Anne style, and a number of villas dotted every here and there; the owners of some down by the shore, we noticed, had had made stables and cellars by hollowing out caverns in the chalk cliffs at their rear. Sea-bathing was going on in a primitive way, tents of sails being erected on the pebbly beach, doing duty for bathing-machines. A great contrast all this to the fashionable watering-place.

St. Margaret's Bay is a charming spot for a picnic, though its quiet seclusion is now threatened by the builder. In the olden days this then unfrequented bay was a favourite landing place for the smugglers, and many a cargo has been successfully run in here, and, perhaps, as many captured. Anent the matter of smuggling, it seems to be generally imagined that such a thing no longer exists, except the little innocent operations of travellers, done more for the excitement and amusement of the thing than from any gain thereby. However, the law courts every now and again, to the surprise of some, prove this to be by no means the case, though the mode may vary. Not so very long ago a vast amount of smuggled tobacco was imported into a

northern seaport secreted in hollow logs of timber, and the fact was only discovered by one of the supposed-to-be beams of wood being crushed by another falling upon it during the progress of unloading the ship, and thus by chance revealing its contraband contents. Indeed, coming down to this very year 1887, on February 15, in the Court of Queen's Bench, a certain James Voase was charged with smuggling tobacco.

> The case for the Crown was that in October 1884 James Voase got some men to fetch from Flushing to Hull about 1,200 lbs. of tobacco in a boat of four or five tons, called the 'Rover.' On a second trip the boat was lost near Yarmouth, but the men were picked up. A vessel of twelve or fourteen tons, the 'Petrel,' was next acquired, and in March and October she carried from Flushing to Hull 1,760 lbs. and 3,400 lbs. of manufactured tobacco, and these three cargoes were landed at Hull without any duty having been paid. . . . Verdict for the Crown, triple value and duty, in all 6,208*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, with immediate execution.

And this is not a singular case! But it has been left for the cute 'Yankees' to perfect the art of smuggling. More than one ingenious and novel 'dodge' of theirs was brought to my notice during a trip I took to America shortly after the Civil War. On either bank of the St. Lawrence are two small towns that face one another, and to prevent any illicit traffic between these the river was regularly and constantly patrolled by United States preventive boats. However, a certain clever citizen of that enterprising country managed for a long while to carry on a prosperous and extensive smuggling trade in spite of their watchfulness. It was eventually discovered

that he had laid a flexible rubber tube right across the bed of the river to the Canadian side, and by the aid of a small steam-engine he pumped the spirits duty free across, whilst the Government boats were carefully watching above. The fact was only brought to light because the authorities' suspicions were aroused by the numerous barrels of whisky leaving the store, and, an inquiry following, the whole adroit scheme was revealed. One may be sure that when an American undertakes a matter of this kind he will do it in an original way.

Returning to Folkestone, we determined that our next stage should be to Canterbury. Leaving that fashionable watering-place, the road proved to be uninteresting at first, but gradually it plucked up a little spirit, and became first pretty, then very beautiful. From Folkestone to Canterbury you may go by the old coach road (possibly this is the easiest way for driving), or you may go across country, which route by the map appears almost as direct, though there is no main highway. Country byroads are, however, puzzling to a stranger, and on them unless careful, even though provided with the best of maps, one may be led miles out of the way. Still the byways are ever the pleasantest, taking the traveller as they do into the very heart of the land, revealing to him remote and unfrequented districts. So, in this case, we found that they would lead us through an out-of-the-way and little-travelled portion of Kent, therefore we decided for them in preference to the old mail road. We did not do this, however, without some slight misgivings, for though the morning was delightfully

fresh and pleasant, the sun every now and again shining out cheerily and warmly, still there was a plentiful supply of suspicious clouds about, rain-charged and bulging with aqueous vapour; moreover, the barometer had fallen considerably during the night, and, as far as we could judge from our maps, there were only a few small villages on our way, which might or might not afford us temporary shelter in case of a downpour. Not that we much minded rain as a rule, or were ever much annoyed by it, only when you are puzzling your way amidst the mazes of turnings and twistings of country lanes, fine weather is desirable. I will even go so far as to say that a drive on a wet day (provided there is occasionally a glimpse of sunshine, and you are properly equipped with waterproofs) is rather to be enjoyed than otherwise: the air then is sweet, clear, fresh, laden with countless perfumes, the colours of the landscape are brought out in a wonderful manner, and the distance is brought near. It is worth even a wetting to watch a summer shower making slow progress across the landscape, softened into a silvery mist as it gradually loses itself amongst the blue hills far away; then when the sun shines forth once again upon the glistening leaves and raindrops, on the earth and grass and everywhere, it is for the moment (for those who have eyes trained to see the abounding loveliness around) as though the world were strewn with gems. And the wreathing mists and wandering clouds of such a day, white or golden in the light, a pearly grey in shade, full of exquisite graduation, crisp in outline here, softening away

there, till all form is lost, now sharp and well defined, now vague and full of mystery, endless in shape, infinite in variety—is it not a perpetual delight for a lover of the beautiful to watch all these?

I have said that the road out of Folkestone, though it began badly as to scenery, gradually improved in that respect, and until we neared Canterbury I think the country, were it possible, grew more beautiful with each mile we traversed. Striking inland in a northerly direction, we passed through a well-wooded park, and then gradually our road ascended through an opening in the downs, affording us as we rose charming prospects over timbered park and low swelling hills.

Through this pass in the downs we observed, to our sorrow, a new railway being made, which, with its attendant débris, embankments of glaring white chalk, obtrusive bridges, fussy contractor's locomotives, dirt-laden wagons, rubbish, and all the other manifold eyesores pertaining to a railway under construction, utterly ruined the fine prospect. The long straight line of ugliness attracted the eye whether it would or no—it cut the landscape, as it were, into two portions, there was no escaping from it. A railway, even when time, with its growth of verdure and weather-toning, has softened down its harsher features, is not an attractive addition to a pretty landscape—engineers', contractors', and shareholders' opinions notwithstanding. Useful and necessary it may be, but in a quiet pastoral valley like this a brand-new railway, with its mud-banks, scarred cuttings, and earth wastes, sadly mars all rural

charms. This hateful, commonplace, commercial railway kept us unwelcome company for miles. How out of place it seemed in this remote and beautiful corner of fair Kent! Surely it cannot be required: the villages appeared to us to be few and far between. How much longer now will they retain the charm of remoteness and their unsophisticated naturalness?

Railways somehow invariably manage to drive old customs, traditions, local characteristics, provincialisms, and all originality out of a district. They make towns and villages much alike, and level up—or down is it?—people and places into one dead, uninteresting uniformity. Half the charm of travel is the thorough change it gives, a real, restful change. The quiet rural scenes, the unsophisticated country-folk one meets, the delightfully picturesque old-time buildings, that have never known the hand of the modern builder, the old-fashioned hostelries, the weather-beaten farmsteads, the village greens with their clustering cottage homes and romping children: all these and many other things, with the absence of newness and the hurry and rush of our money-making age with all the selfishness it begets—all these pleasant things are the very poetry of travel. A wonderful relief to the town-tired eye this wealth of unstudied picturesqueness, this natural beauty, delightful in its unconsciousness; such scenes are eminently soothing and peace-giving both to brain and body, wearied with the noise and bustle of our unbeautiful cities. A startling contrast they afford the dweller in our large commercial cities, so depressing, unromantic,

and commonplace, whilst the English country is, on the other hand, surpassingly lovely and abounding in interest. The more, therefore, the pity that the portions of it left to us unspoilt by railways cannot be for ever preserved from their intrusion, for somehow, wherever a railway goes, there the blight of ugliness follows, as sure as night does the day. Unfortunately its undoubted utility is none the less certain than its capabilities for ruining scenery. Why this most regrettable fact? The truth is, engineers are not artists, otherwise much might be, and could have been, done to beautify railways. Imagine an artistic railway! And yet it is a possibility as far as the roadway and stations are concerned; the locomotive must of necessity be ungainly, but this passes by, and does not remain permanently. Had the iron horse been invented in their day, the ancient Romans or our early English cathedral-building forefathers would have made its roadway a pleasing object in the landscape rather than the very reverse, for they ever combined beauty with utility. A Roman railway! What a grand piece of work it would have been! what noble railway-ducts and classic stations they would have raised; there would have been poetry in railways then! Graceful forms are not more expensive than ugly ones, and railway bridges, stations, and—coming down even to smaller matters—signals might be made far less displeasing to the eye than they are; and often the pleasing form is the stronger and more serviceable—take, for instance, the simple arch as an example.

Unless we happen to reside in them, I hardly

think we realise the damage done and the disturbance caused by a railway to the peaceful quietude of a rural valley. Take Matlock Dale, for instance: the often-repeated noise and hurrying rush, rush! of the speeding mail trains, the shrieking, laboured puffing, bang—bang—banging! of shunting mineral wagons, have utterly robbed that once restful spot of all its tranquillity and half its poetry; and, alas! the more romantic the scene the more readily is it spoilt. Then, again, at Rowsley, farther up the valley, in the very heart of one of the most beautiful—and formerly one of the most reposeful—spots to be found anywhere in Britain, the same sinning railway has converted acres of pleasant green fields, by the side of the romantic trout-haunted Wye, into a waste of desolation, a wilderness of lines for shunting coal trains. Once this was a little land of greenest meadows, golden and silver with buttercups and daisies, now a black, noisy, and noisome spot—a bit of the Black Country transferred, placed right in the midst of a lovely green valley, erst one of the most charming in England. Now the sweet country air is polluted with sulphurous vapours, for the locomotives are many and smoky, its hill-girt silence is fretted with the harsh unceasing sound of the railway whistle, and all its rural peacefulness is gone. And, oh, the pity of it!

Of course the traveller by rail, who only sees the country from the carriage window as he is conveyed along, notices only its beauty, or what he can of it from the 'hurrygraphs' he gets, that is,

when he is not in a gloomy cutting or in a darksome tunnel (which by the nature of things abound just where the scenery is the most beautiful); the lasting ugliness of the intruding line is hidden. To see the country from a railway carriage and to see the railway from the country are two wholly different matters. But enough. I who write this am no enemy to railways—in their place—but with my whole strength do I protest at the needless way they too often spoil the fairest scenes, choosing for their shunting grounds—ugly iron bridges, of the Birmingham art-school—some of the choicest spots in the land, as at Matlock and Rowsley, before mentioned; and, to give another example, in that most romantic Welsh valley of Dolwyddelan, just at the finest portion of it, and where there are some picturesque cascades, there the railway crosses with its viaduct—naturally enough, for it is always thus. And in like manner they intrude upon the remotest and loveliest of our valleys, when others equally suitable are open to them, and all this without the slightest consideration of the beauty and quiet peacefulness that they for ever destroy. A railway has actually been planned to go through the unique Dove Dale, and another through the Pass of Llanberis; but for once the sentiment of the many proved stronger than the profit of the few, and they remain only on paper—an excellent place for them. Why always choose the loveliest and most romantic spots for your unromantic lines, Mr. Railway Engineer?

Lyminge, the first village we came to, is as

pretty a hamlet as one would meet on a day's stage, or a dozen, for that matter—a rambling, spread-out place, picturesquely scattered over a good deal of ground. Here, amongst other buildings, we noticed a fine old timbered farmhouse, having curious stacks of chimneys on the outside, and with large barns and buildings around, patched and repaired in a happy makeshift way, the very antithesis of a modern model farmstead, so perfectly prim, and unpicturesquely neat.

What grand buildings these old Kentish farmhouses are! Most of them appear to have been manors, halls, or gentlemen's residences in their day. The number of these ancient homes must have been very great at one time in the county, telling of a past prosperity, for the buildings are all of more or less importance, and possess a distinct individuality. In truth, they are noblemen's residences on a small scale—compared, that is, to such stately piles as Speke Hall, Hatfield, and others, not that they are of insignificant proportions in themselves. Even a Kentish yeoman of the period was a man of substance, for are we not told that—

> A knight of Cales, a gentleman of Wales, and a laird of the North Countrie :
> A yeoman of Kent, with his yearly rent, will buy them up all three ?

Looking at our maps, we found Elham to be the next place marked in the direction we were journeying, so we pulled up opposite a carpenter's

shop to ask which was our road. 'Elham—Elham,' repeated the carpenter—'I never heard of such a place; there ain't no village of that name about these parts.' 'But it is marked on our map,' we said. Then a consultation took place with a brother workman, after which he replied: 'Maybe it's HE-lam you means' (great emphasis being placed on the 'he'); 'there are two ways there, if that's the place you wants.' It was evident we had mispronounced the name of the village. E-lam, or rather He-lam, appears to be the local mode of saying it. More than once we have thus erred. Indeed, when wishing to ask your way in the country, it is not always easy to hit upon the right pronunciation of places as by custom established, for it is usage, not spelling, that rules in this matter. Without knowing the fashion, who would imagine, for instance, that Cirencester was called Cisister; Belvoir, Bever; Beauchamp, Beecham; or that Launceston became Launston; Llandudno, Llandidno, and so forth?

However, to return to our questioning. 'As there are two roads there, which is the better?' we demanded.

'They're both about the same; one is hilly at first and level afterwards, the other is level at the beginning and hilly at the end.'

'Then, which is the shorter?'

'They're both about the same distance.'

'Well, if you were driving, which road would you take?'

'Oh, I generally goes one way and comes back the other!'

We thought it useless to continue the conversation, so drove on, and when we came to the fork of the two roads we tossed up as to which we should take. If it came 'head' we would go right; if 'tail,' left. 'Head' had it, and to the right we went accordingly. I know not, if 'tail' had decided our course, what it would have been like, but as it was, our way led us along a narrow and very pretty valley, that reminded us much of a Devonshire combe.

At the top of the hill, close to the spot where we tossed up to decide our course, stood two windmills close together, but though built for the same purpose they were strangely dissimilar: the one was tall and thin and painted white, the other was short and stout and, oddly enough, painted black—a curious contrast. Why, we wondered, did they differ so, even to their colour? Standing thus side by side, in all respects the very opposite of each other, they attracted attention; even windmills, it seems, have an individuality.

Elham proved to be a considerable village, possessing a large and remarkably fine old church, having a massive embattled tower, crowned by a spire. Almost more deserving of the name of country town than village is Elham; indeed, some new 'cities' in the Western Territories of America, that spring up there mushroom fashion, are smaller in size and have fewer inhabitants. But Elham, as may be seen by its hoary old church and quaint time-toned timbered houses, is no place of modern growth: its history belongs to the past. In fact, at one period it

appears actually to have been a town of considerable importance, boasting even of fine buildings, some traces of which still remain. According to a description given of Elham by an old Kentish historian and antiquary, John Philipott, about the year 1644 (which we came upon whilst hunting for particulars about Westenhanger), it must have sadly come down in the world, for he says : 'Though now the magnificent structures which in elder times were here, be dismantled, and have only left a mass of deplored rubbish to direct us where they stood, yet in Domesday Book, it is written, that the Earl of Ewe, a Norman, and near in alliance to the Conquerer, held it, and left the reputation of an Honour unto it, as the reputation of the aid granted at the making of the Black Prince a Knight, in the twentieth of Edward the Third, doth warrant.'

In the wide roadway of the village stands a long and large old timbered house, converted into cottages now, but, for all the unfortunate transformation, its main features are still fairly preserved. Quaintly irregular and charmingly original this is, with an upper story projecting the whole of its length, supported by carved-oak beams and brackets, the roof being in like manner upheld—a building that takes the imagination back long centuries. Curiously carved figures, with features fancifully conceived, ornament its woodwork—a delight to look upon, lending an interest to the old structure that similar modern ones never seem to possess. Jokes in wood are these, telling plainly of the playfulness of the olden builders, who rejoiced in their humour and

loved a little merriment, as is proved also by the enigmas they sculptured in stone, as well as the grotesque forms they gave to the bent and twisted wrought-iron work they employed in their buildings —metal individualised. How different all this to the monotonous dulness and sameness of the more recent houses that compose our streets, with all their meaningless mechanical mouldings, repeated and multiplied by the million! Much good may they do us! They are meant for ornamentation, but they merely weary the eye by the constant repetition of similar forms, which displease because so commonplace; they possess neither beauty nor quaintness, and are utterly wanting in intention— cheap and profitless. On the other hand, upon each of these old houses the ancient craftsman has left his mark, stamping it with something of his individuality. Even in the humblest cottage, upon a porch or at an odd corner of a gable, or, failing these, somewhere in a beam, he generally managed to express himself, rudely oftentimes, but always with an unmistakable spirit that tells of work done by one who enjoyed the doing of it. Even in sacred edifices the old English monkish carver could not restrain his love for the grotesque, his jocund genius craved for something more emphatic than benign angel faces and the reproduction of simple foliage; it seems now and again as though his fancy overcame him and would out and have full play, so he created grinning devils, mocking imps, and hideous monsters, all evolved from his inner consciousness, his imagin-

ings of what unseen but believed-in things were like. And because of his mighty mediæval monkish faith, begotten of a superstitious legend-loving age, so wholly opposed to our credulous prove-everything-by-science day, in which men profess so much and credit so little, he, the monkish sculptor in question, really believed in the fiend-like demons he materialised, and this accounts for their living, spontaneous look. However undesirable or to be dreaded, these, they seem as though they might be: very different in this respect to the dead, lifeless carvings of such things we now produce to order in and on our churches, for the modern workman merely thinks of ornamenting stone, he neither believes nor fears in the being of demons; and how, even supposing that he possessed the skill of the old mediæval craftsman, could he personify creatures that to him have no existence, in the spirit or out of it? And what a contrast between the enlightened nineteenth-century British workman and his poor superstitious fellow-labourer of the past! One hardly knows what it is to do good honest work, the other did not know how to do anything badly; the latter loved his religion and the beautiful, but he was humorous likewise, and rejoiced to have his harmless jest in stone. For the monks of old, let their detractors say what they will, whilst not all or wholly despising the good things of the world, could fast as well as feast, could be serious as well as joke, could work as well as play, could make merry and be sad, all in their seasons. But the secular mason had even greater liberty than they: he was not limited to conventional foliage, placid saints, or leering devils;

moreover, he made full use of his liberty—sometimes, indeed, it degenerated into licence, but it must be remembered he lived in a ruder though more honest age.

Leaving Elham, we passed a most cosy-looking abode, all covered with ivy, and with old-fashioned clipped yew-trees in front that one so rarely sees now; another house near by it had its porch overgrown with hops—two ideal homes. So we drove on through a charming country, full of 'bits' delightful to the eye of an artist. Peeps we caught every now and again as we drove along of grey old farmsteads, of quaint gables of ancient homes half hidden by envious foliage, typical examples of real English country life, of red-tiled cottages whose careless untrimmed gardens were full of homely sweet-smelling flowers; a country diversified as well with hill and valley, girt with pleasant woods, and abounding in little streams that made musical with their wordless songs the rural silence.

It afterwards repented us that we had not rested at the old-fashioned inn at Elham that looked so inviting as we passed by, but the day had grown so pleasant, the scenery was so truly enchanting, the temptation to continue was almost irresistible. Still the most beautiful scenery is apt to pall upon a hungry man, and after a time that fact began forcibly to impress us. Humanity is frail, and just then we were full of Dr. Johnson's opinion 'that the finest scenery is improved by a good hotel in the foreground.' Romance must give way before hunger, for has not even the poet said of man:—

He may live without books—what is knowledge but grieving?
He may live without hope—what is hope but deceiving?
He may live without love—what is passion but pining?
But where is the man that can live without dining?

Somewhat anxious to gather what the fates might have in store for us, we pulled up to inspect our map. Glancing over this, we noticed that till we arrived at Canterbury there was only one village marked upon it, Dorringstone by name, which as it was printed in small letters we presumed to be merely a hamlet, and if we did not find an inn there we concluded that, in all probability, we should not come across one till we reached our evening's destination. So we proceeded regretfully, wishing we had not so heedlessly passed by the comfortable-looking hostel at Elham.

At length we came to Dorringstone, which proved to be a very pretty village covering a great deal of ground. Here, as we entered, we discovered a primitive inn, by no means an ideal country hostelrie that we so often picture to ourselves, indeed it was but little better than a wayside 'public'; however, it had stabling attached, and that was something. It does not do for tired travellers to be over particular; besides, what avails discontent or grumbling when it is a case of Hobson's choice? The gates leading into the stable-yard creaked noisily on their hinges as they were opened, showing little use, and the landlady (we did not see a landlord) had actually to send out for corn! Still our horses obtained a rest and a bait, which after their long and hilly journey from Folkestone they stood greatly in need

A KENTISH ROAD.

ST. GEORGE, HANOVER SQUARE
PUBLIC LIBRARIES

of, and as for ourselves, we made a hearty meal of bread and cheese and ale, the best the inn could do for us. Our frugal repast over, the stuffy little sitting-room that was placed at our disposal did not tempt us to remain in it, so whilst our horses were enjoying their corn and repose we decided to explore the village, and, if by happy chance we could discover the clerk, to have a look over the church. Country churches seldom fail to repay a visit; they are truly 'sermons in stones,' replete with interest for the antiquary, archæologist, or observant traveller —that is, when the old fanes have not fallen a prey to the ravages of the restorer, and been made to look as spick and span almost as though they had just left the contractor's hands—the only thing of the past remaining to them being their history.

As I have said, Dorringstone is a much-spread-out place: it is quite surprising to find how so small a collection of houses can extend themselves over the quantity of ground they do. We had not rambled far when we came upon a cosy, clean, comfortable-looking hostelrie, a pleasant change from the primitive 'public' we had put up at, and, had we only known it, five minutes' more driving would have brought us to these desirable quarters. Somehow we felt vexed with ourselves for not knowing the impossible. I do not agree with the old proverb that 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing;' indeed, as in the present case, it appears to me a little knowledge may be very profitable; surely, to quote one proverb against another, 'half a loaf is better than no loaf at all'? Wending our way up hill towards the

church, whose spire acted as a guide to us, we passed by a charming old house, backed by rook-haunted elms and surrounded by delightful old-fashioned gardens, all snugly ensconced behind great high rampart-like walls supported by flanking outstanding buttresses. Even a wall thus grandly built is pleasing to look upon ; such honest massive ones are not built nowadays, nor do the delightful old shaded gardens, with their broad stone terraces, tree-shaded avenues, bowling-greens, fantastic fountains, lily-grown ponds, shaped flower-beds, secluded harbours, mazes, sun-dials, nut-walks, and quaint conceits in curiously shaped yews, belong to our time. Oh, the charm, the peacefulness of these old English gardens! They are large, varied, and reposeful, a great tranquillity rests over them, they seem to express something of the greatness of the spacious days which brought them into being. Not alone in stately buildings did the great glory of the Elizabethan age declare itself.

Arriving at the church, to our dismay we discovered the restorer there before us ; we had arrived too late, our sworn enemy was in possession, so we turned sadly away. We noticed that even the tombstones and monuments around, near to the church, had been made use of to mix mortar and cut stones upon, and made likewise to do duty for benches and tables. To us it was a pitiful sight, but perhaps we are over sensitive in these matters. Sentiment is at a discount in these matter-of-fact unsentimental days, when railways, without hardly a protest, cut through churchyards heedless of the

slumbering dead, and lay the foundation of their bridges low down amongst the mouldering relics of poor mortality. One thing appeared evident to us, that the monuments nearest a church are the ones to suffer when the time for restoration comes. Were I to choose my last resting-place in a country churchyard, I would select some retired spot well away from the sacred edifice, where I might chance to rest undisturbed and unmolested, and not have my simple monument damaged or destroyed when the church was restored or enlarged.

Deserted

A Seascape. Moonlight on the Sea

CHAPTER XVII.

Extra Long Miles—A Quaint Conceit—Canterbury and Cathedral—Ecclesiastical Tyranny—A Scene for a Pilgrim—An Old English Inn—Old-fashioned Comfort—A Typical Waiter—The First Christian Church in Britain—An American at an English Shrine—A Group of Old-time Buildings A Quaint Sign The Isle of Thanet—Birchington and its Bungalows—West Gate—A Chat with an Old Soldier—A Crop of Indian Corn Underground Buildings—Ramsgate.

RETURNING to our homely inn, we ordered our horses to be put to, and once more proceeded on our journey. Before we started we asked the landlady the distance to Canterbury. 'It's six long miles,' she answered, laying particular stress upon the adjective. 'What, are the miles longer in this part of the world than elsewhere?' we demanded. 'Well, they are to Canterbury,' was the innocent reply, 'because you see they are hilly ones.' She forcibly reminded us of the Scotsman who, in a heated discussion with an Englishman as to the relative sizes of their two countries, said, 'Eh! man, but ye ken if old Scotland were just rolled out level

she'd be as big as England.' As to hilliness, the miles we found to be all that the old woman said; but hilly roads, as in this case, generally mean beautiful scenery, therefore, because ours possessed this desirable merit, we little troubled ourselves about the unevenness of the way.

Though not marked on our map, we did pass through a small hamlet before we reached Canterbury. Here we observed a wayside public-house with its sign projecting from the gabled roof in a curious fashion. Then we came to a church standing close to the road, showing the extreme contrasts of the sturdy Norman and the lightsome, graceful Early English work; but what especially attracted our attention in this structure was the quaint conceit it possessed in the shape of a vane, cunningly designed so as to resemble a bird just alighting: so realistic was this, so excellent the deception, that as we first saw it, dark against the sky, we could not for the moment decide whether it was an actual bird we were looking at or merely an imitation one. Of course, owing to the fact of the bird not moving, the truth was soon revealed, but anything more cunningly devised to deceive the casual observer from a distance we had never come across. The quaint conception is worthy of the ancient Gothic designers, so skilfully and fancifully is it carried out, so does it breathe of the spirit of the mediæval times.

Then, at the last rise of our last hill, we came in sight of Canterbury down in the valley below us. We had a grand and comprehensive view of the ancient

city, with the noble old cathedral proudly dominating all, the very embodiment in stone of the past-time ecclesiastical supremacy. Ecclesiastical supremacy I have said, for was not Canterbury typical of this? Were not its archbishops called 'Popes of a second world'? And, whoever might be King of England, did they not take most excellent care to be kings in England? In the struggle for the mastery between Henry II. and Thomas à Becket, do we not read that the king, two years after the murder of that tyrannical priest, came to Canterbury to do penance 'in expiation for that crime and sacrilege,' and how that, in the garb of a penitent pilgrim, bare-footed, he walked through the streets of the city, 'the rough stones of which were marked by the blood that started from his wounded feet'?—how, arriving at the cathedral, he knelt upon the pavement in the transept where the arrogant archbishop had fallen, the spot being called the Martyrdom, after which he was led by his priestly persecutors into the crypt, and taken to the tomb; then, the rough garment he wore having been removed, 'he received five strokes from each bishop and abbot who was present, beginning with Foliot, Bishop of London, and three from each of the eighty monks'? Afterwards he passed the whole night in the crypt fasting, 'resting only against one of the rude Norman pillars, on the bare ground, with bare feet still unwashed from the muddy streets.' This did a King of England, and a Plantagenet too! But, *tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis*. The times truly have changed. No longer now monarchs go to

Canossa ; and deeds of expiation are not in fashion. Penances and pilgrimages, saints and shrines—a critical age will have none of them. Sacerdotal tyranny, the worst of all, is a thing of the past. So great, indeed, did the memory of Becket become, that Lambard relates that 'the name of Christ was cleane forgotten, and the cathedral itself was called the Churche of S. Thomas ye Martyr.'

Still, in spite of change, now as of old, the cathedral towers of Canterbury, grey with years, rise proudly over the buildings around, as though their very foundations were laid upon them. It must have been an impressive one, this view of the sacred edifice that the pilgrims of the past had from this spot. Only from a distance can one realise the true greatness and magnificence of this structure ; it is too confined with buildings near around to be comprehended close at hand. Looking at it thus, you can only see portions of it at a time, its full majesty is not manifest ; from afar off it seems a very mountain in stone, dwarfing into utter insignificance the puny dwellings below—a miracle in architecture !

It was an impressive view we had of the cathedral, the three stately towers of the ancient fane rising grandly upwards out from the city, which was half hidden in the blue-grey haze of smoke and the gathering gloom of twilight, for the day had grown old, and it was then near 'the hour of evensong.' The towers, a solemn grey in shade, had their sides gilded by the rays of the setting sun ; all else below was vaguely undefined, excepting where a window here and there caught the golden glow from above,

or a restless vane ever and again flashed forth from out the gloom with a sudden cheerful brightness. Hidden by mysterious shadow, it might have been a mediæval city that lay before us, for all that was modern or commonplace was veiled in a grey uncertainty ; and never did the eye of ancient pilgrim rest upon a more romantic vision. For the moment we lived in the picturesque past, the calm peacefulness of evening rested on all around, and we gave full rein to our sentimental imaginings. We tried to make believe that we were ancient pilgrims, and indulged ourselves in a delightful day-dream, for we were in a poetic mood. For a brief moment we lived in another world—a world of old romance and ancient tradition. The vision before us was a poet's dream realised. Such romantic revelations are only for the pilgrim by road : the modern traveller, who journeys by the practical railway, what can he know of such things ? The shrieking of the steam whistle and the rush and rumbling noises of the swift travelling train very effectually drive all poetry away. And what can be more inconsistent than a modern pilgrimage made to some ancient time-hallowed shrine by a comfortable express upon a nineteenth-century railway ?

Arriving in Canterbury, we drove along the old-fashioned streets of that thoroughly English city till we came upon the Rose Inn, the external appearance of which pleased us much : it was an unpretending hostelrie, with an unmistakable air of homeliness and comfort about it. We noticed that there were flowers tastefully arranged on the coffee-room tables,

the linen was scrupulously clean, every one about the place seemed anxious to do all they could for us, and our rooms were the perfection of comfort. These old-time hostels are delightful resting-places for the weary traveller. The good-natured waiter who attended upon us said that he had been seventeen years there; he had a good master, and good tools to work with. It pleased us to hear a servant talk thus; it is refreshing in this age of complaining, of coming and going, and perpetual change, to find that there are still good masters and good servants, and that they mutually esteem one another. It is pleasant also to have an old-fashioned English waiter to attend upon you, in place of the cheap foreigner, who, however good he may be in other respects, can never hold the same place in my esteem as a fellow-countryman who knows all the ins and outs of the locality, be it country or town, and will entertain you with amusing gossip, interest you with a ready flow of tittle-tattle, retail for your especial benefit all the scandal and small beer of the neighbourhood, which often afford food for reflection, and help to pass away agreeably, if not profitably, those odd five minutes he can spare to chat with you. You may learn from him, if you will, the traditions and unwritten histories of the surrounding great families, with which in no other way would you be likely to become acquainted. He is always friendly, delighted to gossip, but never over familiar; he is part and parcel of the good old-fashioned inn, and has nothing in common with the mere machine-drilled German waiter, who haunts our company-

managed hotels, who merges your individuality into a soulless number, and who has no thought or idea, or power of conversation, beyond his occupation of attending to your wants.

Canterbury is a city much visited, but little seen by the majority of Englishmen who make a pilgrimage there : they come by railway, inspect the historic old cathedral, and depart. But, besides the cathedral, Canterbury is full of interest. Its narrow winding streets are lined by quaintly picturesque old gable-roofed houses, and lead the explorer into unexpected quarters, and reveal to him many charming bits of ancient architecture—portions of grey old walls, suggestive Norman work, with the weight of centuries upon them, though aged and crumbling, sturdy still, solemn dark-shadowing arches, relics of old monasteries, remains of ancient hospitals, curious nooks and corners where wall-girt silence reigns supreme : fraught all these with historic memories, forming links in a long chain that connects the present with the past, till the mind wanders back to the dawn of our island's civilisation, back till the time-dimmed days are reached when history merges into tradition, and all is lost in the darkness of recordless ages. And who amongst the number of Englishmen that visit Canterbury ever trouble to make the short excursion to see St. Martin's church, or, possibly, are even aware of its existence ? Yet this very fane, though 'rebuilt and altered out of all recognition,' possesses associations of the greatest interest, for this was the first Christian church in Britain, and here the first Christian English king was baptised.

Surely worthy of a special pilgrimage, this hallowed and storied spot, historically more ancient than the hoary old cathedral itself, and it is but two short miles from the city.

As I have before remarked, it is our Transatlantic cousins who mostly visit these sacred relics of vanished days, of a time when the history of our land was still young, and who stand before them, figuratively speaking, with bated breath. Let a well-known and recently deceased American author, Richard Grant White, and by no means a sentimental one, record his impressions of a pilgrimage to this spot. It is well for us who hold as a precious heritage the stored-up traditions and stone histories of centuries to know how deeply they impress others. Thus, then, writes Richard Grant White of Harbledown church: 'No place that I saw in England took me quite so far back into the past. Here, indeed, I seemed to have got before the Conqueror, and among my forefathers, whom he found in England when he and the rabble of fierce robbers whom he had sharked up landed there and fought and took possession. How did I know but that upon the floor I was standing some man or woman whose blood was flowing in my veins had knelt a thousand years ago? It was more than possible.' Americans feel that our past is a part and portion of their history too, and they reverence the relics of it accordingly, feeling conscious that they 'have some rights of memory in this kingdom.'

To return to Canterbury. In the High Street, close to a bridge and built by the side of a stream,

we observed a picturesque old house; this, with its many carved wooden gables and projecting bay windows, much pleased us. Canterbury abounds in such houses; but the happiest and most picturesque grouping of buildings in or around the city is undoubtedly at its West Gate, as viewed upon approaching it by the old London Road: had an artist had the arranging of these, the effect could hardly be more pictorial. The traveller arriving thus has the ancient grey-tinted and time-worn West Gate before him, built in the reign of Richard II., and the only remaining gateway of Canterbury; this is situated on the banks of the little river Stour, which river in the past presumably formed a moat for additional defence. The drawbridge is of course replaced by one of stone, but otherwise the structure appears to have suffered little alteration. On either side of the roadway here are quaint old houses, all happily varying from one another, charmingly irregular, with broken sky-line, each possessing a character and an individuality of its own. Of these the most noticeable and eye-delighting (if it is fair to discriminate when all are so pleasing) is the ancient Falstaff Inn, an unpretending hostelrie, yet withal it attracts and demands attention —for it has a dignity out of all proportion to its size —because of its pleasant old-fashioned purposeful design, a model of what a modest country hostelrie should be. The building is as pleasant to look upon as a picture, it seems almost too good to be a fact, as though it had been cut out of a painting; but no, there it stands a happy reality, a little humble poem in building, suggestive of the pleasant days of the

past, having a flavour of romance about it, just the sort of hostelry that G. P. R. James, Harrison Ainsworth, and other novelists of that school delighted to portray. A prominent feature of this structure is its projecting signboard, representing the doughty knight who gives the title to the inn, standing upright and defiant, armed with sword and shield in hand. This quaint sign is supported by a grand and elaborate wrought and twisted iron bracket, in itself a grand bit of work of its kind.

From Canterbury we followed along the valley of the Stour, passing through a level low-lying land, a flat country without much of scenic interest, though here and there we came upon a pretty peep of the roof-trees of a distant village, a grey old country church, a time-mellowed farmstead; and once we came upon an ancient mill, backed by dense foliage and with a rush-grown pool of water in front, its grey-green wheel droning as it slowly turned. A portion of our way led us through a long avenue of poplars, reminding us of the interminable national roads of France; still, though the country was less beautiful than that which we had been accustomed to of late, we are not of those who can 'travel from Dan to Beersheba and say that all is barren.'

Arriving at the little village of Sarr, we noticed on entering a painted board conspicuously placed upon one of the houses, with the curious half-French, half-English inscription, 'VILLE-OF-SARRE.' The why or wherefore of this odd information we could not make out. Strangely enough, this large and somewhat important village was not marked on our

otherwise exact map. Here we came upon an excellent road, which led us across a tract of marshy land that was once covered (as also a greater portion of the Stour valley) by the sea. Then the Isle of Thanet was an island in reality as well as in name. Where now the railway goes, and over rich green pastures where cattle feed and peacefully fatten, erst Roman galleys sailed. What startling changes may another thousand years bring forth! We now entered upon a wheat and hop growing country, a hedgeless land, gently undulating, wind-swept from all quarters, the hops being confined to the sheltered valleys: some fields of this plant were further protected from the weather by matting, supported upon a series of stout poles, which plainly revealed to us what care has to be taken to raise this uncertain crop.

Arriving at Birchington, we drove round the curious little settlement of bungalows—of one story, of course, long and low; even the small hotel was built bungalow fashion also, and of wood, looking strangely un-English. An eccentric idea this, of building houses after a plan the outcome of a hot climate; but, after all, perhaps not more so than the fashion that obtained in the last century of raising structures from classic models designed of old to keep out the scorching sun, whilst here in England we require all the light and warmth we can get. Our ancestors knew better: what grand windows those Elizabethan builders gave us! for they loved the sunshine, and brought it into their homes. Not merely glazed holes these, but pleasantly varied by mullion, transom, and quarrelled glass, with the upper lights

often stained as well, through which the softened sunshine shone, glorified—giving a cheerful feeling of warmth even upon a grey, cloudy winter's day. Those old builders knew their work; rather should we copy them than reproduce structures suitable alone for hot climates, where the chief aim is to keep the sunshine out, not to let it in. But the world is full of contradictions.

Next we came to Westgate, a modern watering-place, healthy without doubt, genteel above all things (how I dislike that word!), but depressingly dull. Margate, familiar Margate, with its honest vulgarity, is to me, who love not crowds, even preferable to the eminent respectability and dreary dulness of Westgate. Our hotel was in keeping with the place: an unmistakable spirit of gentility pervaded it. The company in the drawing-room sat in solemn silence. How cheerful some of our modern hotels are! Here may I relate an experience of mine at one of these. Indulging in a cigar in the smoke-room, I made some simple remark to the only other person there; but a somewhat curt reply did not encourage further attempt at conversation. Presently, however, another party appeared on the scene. The ice broken, I spent a very pleasant half-hour chatting with the new-comer—and a very agreeable and interesting companion I found him to be. The waiter, entering, I noticed addressed him as 'my lord.' Next morning I inquired of the said waiter who the two gentlemen I met in the smoke-room overnight were. One, I learnt, was a distinguished nobleman; the other, who looked as though

I had done him some grievous wrong in daring to address him, was, I discovered, none other than a traveller for some firm in London! I found the sea better company than my fellow-creatures that night at the inn; and as I smoked a contemplative pipe, watching the tremulous starlight tenderly reflected upon the wind-rippled waters, and listened to the rhythmic washing of the waves upon the sand—a soft murmurous melody ever repeated in a musical monotone—I did not regret the change from the dull company of man to the cheerful companionship and solace of nature. But, after all, I was not left wholly alone; somebody came up to me and remarked, 'Wonderful place, Westgate, sir. They do say as how it's a straight line direct from here to the North Pole, four thousand miles of water, no land between. The air is grand—leastways, I think so; I've had enough of hot climates. You see, I was all through the war in Egypt; I waited at mess upon General Wolseley, Sir Herbert Stewart, and Colonel Burnaby. Burnaby used to keep every one in roars of laughter with his stories. I shall never forget a tale he told one day; how on his ride to Khiva he got out a sheik's tooth with a preserved meat tin opener. He was a heavy man, was the colonel; none of the camp chairs were strong enough for him; so I had to make him a seat of two wine cases nailed together. I was present when he lost his life; he rushed out of the square in a state of great excitement, and the men followed; it was terrible work.' And so the conversation continued; the old soldier relating his experiences, adventures, and hardships

during the time he served in Egypt, till at last, after many narrow escapes of his life, he was invalided home: all of which we listened to with great interest.

Our next stage was to Ramsgate, whither we went by cross-roads, thus avoiding the tourist throngs that haunt the highways about here. Wagonettes crowded with noisy excursionists—raising clouds of dust as they follow one another unceasingly along—do not add to the pleasure of a quiet-loving road traveller. Though in the main the country of the Isle of Thanet is open, treeless, and wind-swept, still we found in sundry out-of-the-way sheltered nooks many a wood-surrounded farmstead, looking very snug, as embowered in foliage as though they were far away inland, instead of so comparatively near to the sea. A wheat-growing country this: rolling uplands of hedgeless corn-fields, with busy windmills dotted here and there, are its chief features. Wheat flourishes best in such open situations; for it dislikes damp, demanding rather plenty of sunshine and drying winds. It appears to me (speaking as a Londoner, who, however, lives half the year in the country), one great mistake our farmers have long made, and still make, is not considering sufficiently the position as well as the nature of the soil they cultivate; but, too frequently keeping to the old routine of pre-free-trade times, they continue to grow, at a certain loss, crops unsuited to the land they cultivate, just because it paid to grow them thus years ago under different commercial conditions in a less competitive age.

At one farm we passed we observed what we had never seen in England before—a field of Indian corn, presumably an experimental crop. We can vouch for the fact that it looked wonderfully well and healthy, and, as we beheld it in ear, vigorous, and apparently as promising as any similar crop we had seen in America.

Englishmen are so accustomed to hear their climate abused that I verily believe they take it for granted that it is the very worst in the world. Few, I think, are aware of its real capabilities. I have seen and tasted excellent grapes grown out of doors in Southern England, large, luscious, and well flavoured ; further still, I have drunk wine produced from them—not equal to the expensive productions of foreign vineyards, of course, but for all sound, wholesome wine, little, if any, inferior to some of the cheaper sorts that are imported. I also have myself successfully grown tobacco in Sussex out of doors, and without special attention—and, what is more to the point, smoked it and proved its excellence.

At one farmhouse we came upon as we journeyed along we were struck by the peculiar manner in which sundry out-buildings (if that word, in this special case, is not a misnomer) were constructed. The farmhouse in question was built close alongside what we imagined had once been a chalk-pit ; the hollow of this formed a yard, and around it, scooped out of the chalk, were the cart-sheds, shelters for implements, tool-rooms, and the like : a unique and economical arrangement, the dry nature of the chalk causing these to serve their purposes admirably,

without any expenditure for repairs upon walls or roofs.

From Ramsgate we returned to Canterbury, retracing a considerable portion of the way we had previously traversed, further description of which is needless; and again we patronised the 'Rose,' where before we had found such comfortable quarters.

In Chancery

A Home of the Past

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Picturesque Valley—A Curious Name and Custom—An Old House—Hoppers—Chilham—An Octagonal Norman Keep—A Lonely Inn—An Unfrequented Road—Charing—Camps out—The Choice of an Inn—Old-fashioned Comfort—A Remarkable Relic—Ancient Spelling—The Ruins of Charing Palace—A Chat with a Farmer—A Wonderful County—From a Palace to a Farmstead.

Leaving Canterbury, our stage for the day began well; the road was fairly level, and excellent as to surface: the scenery was varied and pretty. Our way led us through a picturesque valley, along which flowed a pleasant little river which kept us welcome company for some miles. What a companionable thing a river becomes to a road wanderer upon a journey, should he fortunately be able, as were we, to follow it for any distance! When he is too far away to hear the musical gurgling of its waters, still cheerfully it sparkles and gleams to him across the meadows and through the trees; and how fresh and green all the vegetation appears along its banks! There is always life, too, by the side of a river; cattle

come down there to drink and cool themselves in it, fishermen haunt it, birds love it, and now and then a stray fish suddenly rises and snaps up a too venturesome fly; and if the traveller is but the least bit of an angler, what memories of past happy days, of heavy creels and a light heart, and perchance as well a picture, will flash up before his mind of a certain favourite well-beloved stream, that he would not make known to even his best friend! It is strange how, in driving across country, little circumstances of this kind, or it may be the sight of some object, such as an old church tower, or even a simple stile, or the corner of a wood, with apparently nothing remarkable about it, will call forth recollections of bygone times, faces and spots far away, and incidents connected with our past life, that till that moment had quite passed from our thoughts.

Though, as I have said, our road was a pleasant one, there was nothing on the way particularly worthy of mention, or that called forth our special attention, till we came upon a signpost, legible for a wonder, with 'To Old Wives Lees' inscribed thereon. This singular name for a hamlet puzzled us much, and, though afterwards we consulted several old works relating to Kent to discover the meaning or origin of the curious title, we failed in our search; but for all that we were not wholly unrewarded for our trouble, for we came across, in a book published in 1808, the following remarks: 'At the village of Old Wives Lees, in Chilham parish, is run an annual race between young maidens and bachelors of good conversation, and between the ages of sixteen and

twenty-four ; the two victors, a maid and a bachelor, being entitled to the sum of ten pounds each, under the will of Sir Dudley Digges. The race is run on the nineteenth of May, and is generally attended by a large concourse of people, both gentry and others.' Whether this strange race is still run I cannot say, but it is quite possible that it may be, for these out-of-the-way, remote hamlets possess a happy knack of retaining old customs and traditions unaltered for long years. Rural folks, even when it is to their own manifest advantage, are very jealous of change. English country life, out of the grooves of well-worn travel, keeps still much of its old simplicity ; the villages bear but few signs of alteration for generations ; the past exists in the present. As for ages back the small communities are markedly divided into three classes—the landlord, the tenant, and the labourer—there is no gradual merging of one into the other as is taking place in our large cities ; the tenants make their respects to the landlords, and in return expect the labourers in like manner to acknowledge them. And the poor labourer at the bottom of the social ladder—what of him ? Is he not taught by his Church catechism 'to submit myself to all my governours . . . and masters ; to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters ; . . . not to covet nor desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me' ? Poor honest Hodges ! Well, contentment is a great thing ; but, however unreasonable I may seem, I maintain that contentment should be

tempered with a moderate desire for progress; for after all, my spiritual masters, discontent gives birth to improvement: had man always been satisfied with his lot, we still might have been living in caves.

I may here mention one fact to prove how conservative this corner of our England is. One day we chanced to come upon a picturesque farmstead by the road-side. Whilst sketching this, the farmer (who, it turned out, owned the little property) came out and bade us 'good day.' He nothing loth, we indulged in a long chat with him. During the course of our conversation we learnt that the farmhouse was called 'The Old Bull House.' Being struck by the exceedingly peculiar title, we inquired the reason thereof. It appears that some hundreds of years ago, when the present highway was but a bridle track, and a poor one at that, the house was a hostel, 'the best about these parts,' according to the tradition handed down from father to son. At the time it was converted into a farm, some two centuries back, another inn was started in its place lower down the road, and to this day this is called 'The New Bull'; and, in spite of all attempts to re-christen the older building with a more appropriate name, the inhabitants around, both far and near, still insist upon giving it its ancient appellation—much, be it confessed, to the annoyance of its worthy owner, who not unnaturally considers the name it bore as an inn long years ago without reason now and wholly inconsistent, and we perfectly agreed with him. Taking us round the farm steadings, our host showed

us an ancient out-building, as old as the house itself. This was in a somewhat tumble-down state, though, in spite of its age, it seemed to us to have suffered chiefly from want of care. Tiles had fallen off here and there, and had not been replaced, so the wet had come in, and caused the woodwork to give way. This, he informed us, still after long centuries went by its original name of the Pack House, so called of old for the reason that the travellers of the period (who were obliged to traverse these parts on horseback, no road for wheel traffic being then in existence here) used to deposit their packs in it, whilst they baited their animals and refreshed themselves at the former hostelry.

As we proceeded we saw a number of hop-fields; and, though the day certainly was hot, nevertheless we were somewhat surprised to notice that not a few of the hardy hoppers of the women kind actually were sheltering themselves under umbrellas whilst doing their picking. Presently we reached Chilham, a very picturesque village, with its grey old church prominently situated upon a height and pleasantly surrounded by woods. Here also are the ruins of an ancient castle—at least, there are the remains of a Norman keep that formed a portion of a one-time extensive stronghold. The keep is interesting because of its uncommon form, being octagonal.

Our road now led us through a well-timbered park, then next through pleasant woodlands. The hedges here are very high, and cut straight upwards, forming walls of green on either side of the way. Presently the country became once more open and

cultivated, and we noticed here and there in the fields long rows of wooden huts, erected, we presume, for the accommodation of the hop-pickers. Now a long stretch of collar work took us high up in the world, and as we rose, so the atmosphere changed, becoming quite bracing—an agreeable contrast to the hot sheltered valleys. The changes of climate one experiences even in a day's drive are frequently most noticeable. Here on this elevated tract of land an overcoat would have been acceptable, yet during the earlier portions of our stage the heat had been almost oppressive. One might travel from the south to the north of England and hardly have a greater diversity of temperature.

At a lonely spot at the top of the hill we passed a solitary public-house, boasting the name of the George Inn; it was a picturesque half-timbered building that had evidently seen better days. Possibly in the coaching age it was a flourishing wayside hostelry. Now it appears quite out of the world, standing all alone, the picture of desolation. How the landlord managed to make a living we could not comprehend; still, although it had manifestly seen more prosperous times, it by no means impressed us in its present fallen state as a roadside 'public' as being without profitable connection, though where its customers came from was a problem we could not hope to solve.

Not far from this ancient hostel we came upon a farmhouse possessing some curious round-headed windows. This also struck us as having been a place of greater importance in the past. Owing to many

circumstances, this portion of England once boasted of numerous residences of more or less pretension, and possessing considerable architectural merits though moderate in size. The great feudal lords do not seem to have overwhelmed the smaller landowners in these parts. The wealth caused by the flourishing iron industry in Sussex and certain districts in Kent, as well as the woollen and clothing trade carried on, gave an impetus to house-building in those counties at the happiest period (in England) of domestic architecture ; so it happens that a goodly number of farmhouses therein possess merits and features seldom found in such structures elsewhere, besides being quaintly picturesque. The Kentish and Sussex families, enriched by their trading and manufactories, took upon themselves the rank of gentry, and built their homes accordingly. It seems to have passed out of the memory of most people that these counties some three centuries ago were the seat of thriving industries. Camden, writing about 1581, says of Sussex and portions of Kent, 'They are full of iron mines in sundry places, where, for the making and founding thereof, there be furnaces on every side, and a huge deal of wood is yearly burnt. . . . The heavy forge-hammers, worked by water-power stored in hammer-ponds, ceaselessly beating upon the iron, fill the neighbourhood around about, day and night, with continual noise.' This may appear strange reading to those who have forgotten the past history of the south of England, being in such startling contrast to its present uncommercial, pastoral, and woodland peacefulness. So renowned,

indeed, became the English wood-smelted iron, that for the first time in our history we began to export this metal in manufactured form; and especially famous was the ordnance, for 'many greate guns were made and sold to foreigne nations.' So general, indeed, became the export of these that we find complaint was made that the Spanish bought and armed their ships with them to fight our own, so that for a time the trade was prohibited. As early as 1543 mention is made in old works of cast cannon having been made at 'Buckstead' (query Buxted?) by a certain Ralph Hogge, who employed a Frenchman, one Peter Baude, as his assistant. We came across a number of farms that by their names still preserve the recollection of this extinct industry, such prefixes as Cinder, Pit, Hammer, Furnace, being not unfrequent.

Coming to the village of Moldash, we observed the name of the hamlet painted on a board which was attached to the wall of the post office. This, we presumed, was a relic of the pre-railway days, designed for the information of travellers by road as to the places through which they passed; otherwise these notices seem to me purposeless, for of course the country people around know full well such things. Here it was that we met with the first windmill since we left Canterbury; so accustomed had we been to see these of late, that we felt there was a something wanting when they were absent from the landscape. What a charm and life, what a touch of poetry, an old mill with its sails slowly revolving gives to a scene! it seems as it were to

possess a very being—not, perhaps, more charming than a water-wheel, with its accompaniment of sparkling, plashing waters; but the one may be seen near at hand or from afar, the other only from a short distance; and it wants, besides, the emphasis of the telling contrast with the light sky. You cannot pass a windmill without notice, be you the most casual of observers, for it boldly sets itself upon a hill-top and insists upon being seen: the water-mill, on the other hand, generally hides itself away in the valley alongside of a stream. Probably also it is further screened from view and chance discovery by surrounding trees, so its beauties are often missed by the traveller.

An unfrequented road with charming scenery brought us to Challock Lees, a primitive village set up on high ground, a remote and healthy spot, and I think about the only English village we had passed through—this journey, at any rate—without seeing a single creature—man, woman, or child—about. This struck us as peculiar, for the sound of the phaeton wheels generally aroused the curiosity of the younger folk at least; and rural people are inquisitive, and seldom fail to inspect the passer by, be he on foot or on wheels. The usual frequenters of the road are well known to them, and a stranger is eagerly discussed. The reason why the small population of Challock Lees should differ so from their kind I cannot say. I verily believe a whole circus might pass through its one somnolent street without causing any enthusiasm or raising a single cheer. Here was a large and very long green or common, but no children

were romping about upon it, not even a stray donkey or goose did we see ; indeed, the whole place appeared as though it had fallen into a state of slumber, never to waken more. We noticed a building here with 'School House' plainly written thereon, and beneath, the legend 'Wisdom hath built her House.'

Continuing our pleasant lonely way, none the less pleasant because so lonely, at the corner of two roads our attention was arrested by a square box of a brick building, as ugly a structure as a traveller might come upon in a lifetime ; in truth, I hardly think it could enter into the mind of man to conceive or erect anything more unsightly, although his capabilities in this direction are great. How man can spoil scenery! This one ungainly edifice, by its obtrusive assertiveness, though small in itself, could not be ignored ; it was, from every direction from which it could be seen, a blot upon the fair landscape, an eyesore there was no escaping from, a bit of perfected ugliness. Even Time, that can do so much, in vain had tried his hand for over sixty years to beautify it, and failed. A large notice on the building informed us that it was a 'Predestinarian Chapel,' with the date of erection, 1821, added. Again another wayside puzzle : where did the worshippers come from ? Come they from Challock Lees, and, if so, does the religion of the villagers account for the little care they have for mere worldly matters ?

A few more miles, and our elevated road came to an ending ; a long and steep descent was before us, a vast extent of wooded country lay spread out,

maplike, ahead. It was a glorious prospect: our visions wandered over a world in miniature, over miles upon miles of changeful greenery, dotted here and there with grey old churches, sleepy hamlets, ancient farmsteads, and rural towns, till all was lost in a dreamy dimness of distant blue. And what a silent world it seemed!—no sounds from it found their way to us.

Down at the foot of the hill we saw a little village, which we learnt from our maps to be Charing. As we had made a long stage, we hurried on, hoping to find there an inn where we might bait our horses and refresh ourselves, for we, as well as they, were hungry and wishful for a rest. Had not the village come into sight just then, we had determined that we would make a camp-out under the shelter of some trees by the wayside, for which we were fully prepared, for we had a camp-kettle with us, and a supply of sundry good things. Tea or coffee were always at our command, Scotch tea also (i.e. whisky); with these and certain tins of preserved provisions, which, with a feed of oats for the horses, we always had ready stored away in the phaeton for cases of emergency, we could at any time manage to camp out if necessary. And very delightful and enjoyable such rural picnics were; indeed, I am not sure that inwardly we did not actually regret that the prospect of handy quarters took away any excuse for indulging in this case.

Yes, very pleasant experiences were our *al fresco* repasts. We selected, of course, for these suitable resting spots, but in the real country, 'far from the

busy haunts of men,' such are not difficult to find. There are still, even in this thickly peopled England, green grass-bordered lanes and byways, untrodden by the professional tourist, possessing many an inviting nook and corner, where the wandering pilgrim may rest and take his ease, and remain the whole long day, and very possibly not be disturbed by a single soul. So it was we never experienced any difficulty in finding a quiet spot for our picnics: if there were any difficulty, it was simply that we were embarrassed by the abundance of our choice. We generally managed to discover some soft grassy bank, under the cool green shade of spreading foliage. Nor were we altogether companionless: birds sang to us, and not unfrequently, after we had made our arrangements, we would find some little unsuspected streamlet near by, that disclosed itself by the musical melody it made as it gurgled along its way to river and distant sea. We seemed, somehow, at such times very close to the heart of Nature. What a sense of peacefulness and restful pleasure there was, lying lazily down, doing nothing but looking upwards and listening to the multitudinous rustling of the wind-stirred trees, and, perchance, the slumberous hum of wandering bees, watching the while the twinkling sun-rays through the entanglements of branches and woven green-gold of the countless leaves above! And what delightful day-dreams would come to us upon these occasions, an untold feeling of repose and thankfulness for the little-considered beauties that we have always around us.

Driving down the hill, we obtained a nearer and more comprehensive view of Charing; this, with the adjoining ruins of the archiepiscopal palace, form altogether a most pleasing picture, and one that caused us to halt some minutes on our descent in order the better to admire it. Entering the village, we pulled up at the Swan Inn, an unpretending old-fashioned hostelrie, one after our own heart. Externally it promised well, nor did the entertainment within belie its outward appearance. It is difficult to give the exact reasons that guided us in our choice of an inn during our journey, but there is an unmistakable look about a well-ordered hostelrie that cannot be conveyed in words. Clean windows, flowers, and a generally cared-for neat appearance are good signs; but these are by no means all, and, other things wanting, they may exist and yet the hotel be an undesirable resting spot. In such matters experience alone teaches: a dear but most excellent school. So well had it instructed us that now, when we arrive at a strange town, we prefer, instead of consulting a guide-book or asking for a recommendation, to drive round about the place upon a tour of inspection, and, after seeing all, to choose our inn for ourselves, for we always prefer, when obtainable, old-fashioned comfort to modern show, big bills, and little ease.

However, after this digression, to return to the Swan at Charing. Here we found an obliging landlord, who, upon noticing us drive up, came out to greet us with a ready smile of welcome, and found also such comfortable quarters that we at once

determined to spend the night there, especially as we desired time to explore the ruins ; and, moreover, from the glance we had of it, the old-world unimproved village, with its ancient church and buildings, appeared as though it would well repay leisurely inspection. Besides, in such a journey as ours hurry has no part or portion : did it please us, we would stay even a week at Charing ; did the reverse hold good, we would simply bait and be off again. Happy travellers, to be so independent ! Time-tables had no terrors for us ; we knew nothing of the worry of luggage, for our belongings were with us wherever we went, always ready at command ; we never felt hurried and bustled at having to catch a certain train.

That we had come at Charing upon a real old-fashioned hostel was plainly revealed to us by the many little attentions and civilities we received, and a manifest anxiety to please. An air of friendly homeliness pervaded the unpretending establishment, so that we felt at our ease the moment we entered its hospitable doors ; and to show how well we were treated, I may remark that with the sweets which accompanied our little dinner (plain but excellently cooked this) came a large jug full of real thick cream. And I maintain that a simple meal thus well cooked and nicely served is better far and more to be desired than the indigestion-giving *tables d'hôte* that have taken the place of the good old-fashioned and wholesome dinner, from the joint, of our forefathers, *tables d'hôte* consisting of a series of messy made-up dishes, to be taken wholly on faith, and

covering their shortcomings under grand foreign names.

When we left our inn the next morning we were further gratified by a most moderate bill; the landlord came to see us off, and bid us a pleasant journey in the good old style. Such little attentions certainly cost nothing, but, all the same, they are very pleasing. Civility oils the wheels of life, with it the world is a far more agreeable place to live in than without, and we have ever found that courtesy begets courtesy—a fact that it is well for the traveller to bear in mind. After all, for good or for ill, the world is much as we make it: if we smile it smiles back to us, if we frown it frowns back in return; life is short, and who will blame us if we prefer the smiles to the frowns?

Our first visit at Charing was to the church. Having learnt that we could procure the keys of this at the watchmaker's in the village, thither we went accordingly, and upon making our request known they were at once handed to us, and we were allowed to inspect the old fane unaccompanied. I almost think that permission is given too freely to utter strangers to visit our country churches thus all alone. An instance has come to my notice in which one of these has been robbed of some rare and beautiful brasses by a seemingly respectable individual, who gained admission to it without being attended by a clerk or any one else, of which more anon.

Charing Church struck us as being more pleasing externally than internally. It was famous in past times for having contained a remarkable relic, gone

no one now knows whither, probably burnt at the Reformation ; it was just one of those 'superstitious things' that the matter-of-fact Puritans would delight to get hold of and to 'utterly destroy.' This rare relic was nothing else than 'the actual block upon which John the Baptist was beheaded, brought over from Palestine by Richard Cœur de Lion.' Whatever virtues it may have had, it would appear that it could not save itself. Here we noticed a few old carved-oak pews, but what interested us most were some corbels on the walls (four in all), consisting of heads and devices upon different shields, one of which bore the date '1598,' another '1629'; the remaining two shields were without dates, but were carved with heraldic emblems, possibly of interest to the antiquary, but to others, like ourselves, unenlightened in such matters, meaningless. We also noticed an inscription to 'Sr Robert Honywood. Knt heir to his Ancestors.' This we copied chiefly for its curious spelling, public being written 'publique'; seven, 'seaven'; she, 'shee'; April, 'Aprill'; and so forth throughout. From a comparison of the inscriptions upon many monuments raised to deceased persons of distinction about this period, we have been much struck at the diversity of spelling found upon them ; as in the present case, some of the words on these ancient memorials, though quaintly spelt, are easy to comprehend, but it is not always so, as the following list of words will abundantly prove. The meaning of these we had to guess at by their context, otherwise I fear we should never have made them out. The following, then, are some of

the words transcribed from another tomb, with their presumed equivalents in modern English following after each :—vout, vault ; fulfeire, full fair ; therinne, therein ; bi See andby lond, by sea and by land (telling how the body was conveyed to its last resting-place) ; dede, did ; auctorite, authority ; sikness, sickness ; yer, year ; and so forth, by which it will be seen that the spelling of similar words at this period varied to an alarming extent. As those responsible for these we may fairly presume were in a good social position, and therefore we may suppose well educated, the difference of opinion as to how words should be spelt must have been considerable ; the freedom they indulged in appears nowadays simply astonishing.

Next we inspected the picturesque ruins of the archiepiscopal palace, now converted into a farmhouse and cottages. The ancient gateway, grey with years, still exists, overgrown with ivy and abounding in wallflowers—a telling subject for the artist's brush. Approaching the portion of the ruins that has been converted into a farmhouse, we came upon the tenant of the place, seated comfortably in a sheltered nook, and indulging in an after-dinner pipe. We bade him good-day, and asked permission to ramble about the ruins, which was at once granted. But as the good-natured farmer seemed in nowise disinclined to open up a conversation, before proceeding further to explore the place we determined to gratify his wishes in this respect, especially as in doing this we pleased ourselves as well as him, as we were thus enabled to learn how he viewed the

world as well as ourselves. To condense, then, the long conversation we had, this is what we gathered from it. He had come there twenty-six years ago; there had been many alterations in the place during that time, a good deal of the old structure having been pulled down. Roses grew all over the place, he had never known them to flourish elsewhere so luxuriantly; wallflowers also grew everywhere upon the old buildings. 'Did he find farming profitable?' Well, he managed to get along somehow, but the fact was owners were unwilling to come down in the rent of land equal to the fall in the prices of commodities. He hoped that there would be some return for hop-growing that year (1886), for there was none the one previously, 'when you could buy hops for forty shillings per hundredweight in the Borough Market, and they could not be grown in Kent for forty, nor fifty, nor yet sixty shillings.' He told us that he thought Kent was a wonderful county, for it was stocked with everything, rich people and poor people, idle and industrious, stupid and clever, good land and poor land, good landlords and bad ones, and I have forgotten how many other various kinds of people and things.

It would be a great blow to poor people if hop-farming had to be discontinued, for it gave the townsfolk once a year a profitable and healthy outing in the country. A family with the help of their children might earn, if industrious, from ten to fifteen shillings a day, and it was a sort of play-work; moreover, they secured their pay whatever the farmer got, and, besides, were free from all his anxieties. He had a

book indoors that had belonged to his great-grandfather, his grandfather, and father in turns; it was over two hundred years old, and gave the accounts of a farm of 196 acres that they had all held, father and son, after each other. They farmed the land, the landlord allowing them for labour, taxes, and tithes. It was a curious arrangement; he could not easily explain it in a few words, but he could show me that, when the accounts were made up at the end of the year, the landlord did not get more than five shillings an acre for his property. He just mentioned this to prove that times were not so much worse in some parts for landowners now than they used to be. However, of the 196 acres, he had to confess that there was a good deal of waste land. We failed quite to understand his remarks as to the way the arrangement was carried out, but the final result was, he assured us, as stated, and the landlord could get no one to manage better. One remark he made may possibly bear somewhat upon the matter of agricultural depression: in his younger days, he said, farmers used to commence walking, and ended by riding; now they start riding and driving, and end by having to walk. Much else of various matters we gathered during the course of our conversation, but space will not permit me to enter into these.

The old farmhouse, consisting as it does of a portion of the ruined palace walls roofed over, with mighty gables, ivy covered, one side being actually all roof, down almost even to the very ground, forms a most pleasing and picturesque object; one might travel far and long before coming upon such another charm-

ing and romantic farmstead. One portion of the building has a kind of ladder or wooden stairway outside, leading to upper chambers (so, at least, we supposed), an old-fashioned arrangement, and delightful because so primitively original and quaintly inconvenient; beneath this, just visible through a tanglement of ivy, we managed to make out the date 1586 carved upon a stone. We noticed also, in an outbuilding now used for a barn, though doubtless in olden time it served a very different purpose, some ancient Gothic windows built up, and, as well, we observed the remains of sculptured heads on two old corbels, placed upon either side of the arch that now forms the entrance thereto. These may have been saintly or the reverse; we guessed the reverse, but they have become so weather-worn that it is impossible now to tell which. An old well, probably the very one belonging to the former palace, we noticed had its sides completely covered with hart'stongue ferns, at least as far down as we could trace till our vision was lost in a grey-green gloom—a sight to behold. Altogether, this rambling old farmstead, with its grey historic time-toned walls, its great roofs, lichen-laden, glowing a ruddy gold in the soft sunshine, had an indescribable charm for us, and long that summer noon did we wander, in a delightful day-dream, about the ruins of the once stately palace, endeavouring in our mind to re-edify it, and to picture to ourselves something of what it must have been like in the time of its great glory. Little did the proud builders of old think to what purpose the magnificent pile they raised here, in such splendid

state, would in long after years be put to. But travel the wide world over—

> 'Tis still the same ; where'er we tread,
> The wrecks of human power we see.
> . . . . . .
> And still let man his fabrics rear
> August in beauty, grace, and strength ;
> Days pass—thou Ivy, never sere,
> And all is thine at length.

Bell Turret. Ightham Mote

The End of the Journey

CHAPTER XIX.

Lenham—A Curious Fresco—A Lake-girt Castle—Maidstone—In the Land of Hops—A Hoppers' Camp—Scenic Contrasts—A Wayside Hostel—An Original Landlord—Ightham—The Oldest House in Kent—Ightham Mote—A Fortified House—A Family Chapel—Dame Dorothy Selby—A Brass Five Centuries Old—Sevenoaks—Knole Park—The End of the Journey.

Situated upon an unfrequented road, out of the way of the tourist beat, the past history and importance of Charing seem to be nearly wholly, if not quite, forgotten now. In olden times this road was not so forsaken, for it formed then a portion of the pilgrims' way to Canterbury, and more than one king of England has been a guest at the archiepiscopal palace whilst journeying thither. Henry VIII. was also lodged and entertained within its hospitable walls in the year 1520, when on his way to have his famous interview with Francis I. in the Field of the Cloth of Gold, besides countless other people of lesser fame; but, as I am not writing history, I must be excused from enumerating these.

We had not proceeded far on our way after leaving Charing when we observed, some little distance from our road, the great gables and clustering chimneys of an old house peeping above surrounding trees. As such old buildings have always an attraction for us, we pulled up, and, dismounting, wandered down the narrow lane that led in the direction of the place. And well were we rewarded for our short ramble. The old farmstead—for such it turned out to be—like numberless others in these parts, had once evidently been the residence of a gentleman of wealth or position. The building had evidently suffered much from time and neglect, yet perhaps it was more picturesque as we saw it then than it had ever been, for its walls were weather-toned and stained with almost every hue by the sun and rain of long-forgotten years; its high-pitched roofs, green here and there with mosses, were in parts tinted a rich orange with lichens, a marvel of colour when the sun shone upon them; its wooden gables, though much decayed, showed how masterly they had been carved of old; its stone mullioned windows were quaintly shaped; and altogether, with its great red-brick chimney stacks, its old-fashioned garden with its curiously shaped box and yew trees, it formed a picture delightful to look upon.

How charming are these old-world homes, unnoted and unknown, yet, for all, they each possess their little histories, their unwritten romances, their unrecorded traditions. Not a few, even in these days of steam and electricity, are reputed to be haunted, and still, in this matter-of-fact day, many a

strange story connected with them may the legend-loving traveller discover, if he knows how to go the right way to work. More than one romantic episode have we unearthed connected with these unhistoric but picturesque homes ; they verily seem to abound in tradition.

Proceeding on our way, there was nothing else that particularly arrested our attention, though the country in itself was very beautiful, till we came to Lenham, a small town or large village—I hardly know which to call it—a picturesque rambling place, full of old houses. The church here as we passed by looked exceedingly interesting, so we inquired at an old half-timbered and white-plastered cottage, close to the ancient lych-gate, where the keys were kept, and were directed higher up the village to the wheelwright's. Here we found the clerk, who accompanied us back to the church. When we got there we discovered that the doors were open, and learnt from our guide that they were always kept so throughout the day, though why we had not been informed of this fact when asking for the keys appeared to us somewhat strange. We found a good deal to interest us in the interior of Lenham Church. Upon entering, the clerk called our attention to a very curious old fresco on the wall, discovered, he told us, when the whitewash was removed some twenty years ago. This represents a figure holding a gigantic pair of scales, on the one side of which is the Devil, and on the other an infant ; the infant, according to the balance of the beam, is by far the heavier of the two. This is supposed to mean, according to our informant,

that the soul of an innocent child outweighs the Evil One. Possibly, though what the artist of old really did mean by this extraordinary production can now only be conjectured ; the painting certainly does not readily explain itself. It has faded very much, we were told, from exposure to the air since it was first discovered, at which time the colours were comparatively bright. Then the clerk called our attention to an old brass, the inscription on which we deemed of sufficient interest to copy, and this, for the benefit of my readers, I here transcribe :

In this Bedd of Earth Sleeps the Body of Robert
Thompson son & Heire to Henry Thompson.
He was Grandchild to that trully religiovs matron
Mary Honywood, wife of Robert Honywood of Charing Esqre.
Who had at her decease lawfully Descended
367 Children, 16 of her owne Body, 114 Grandchildren—
228 in the third Generation, 9 in ye fourth, whose
renown lives with her posterity, whose Body Lies
in this Church & whose Monvment may be scene at
Manhes Hall in Essex, where she exchanged Life for Life.

Built in one of the walls we noticed the effigy of a priest, of the fifteenth century, so we were informed, and we took the date for granted, for unfortunately our antiquarian knowledge did not extend far enough to prove or disprove the statement. We also inspected the richly carved pulpit, and, what interested us more, the oak stalls of the former monks, that still remain ; but the most curious thing in the church is a massive stone, cut somewhat in the form of a chair, though whether it served this purpose appeared to us extremely doubtful. This is now placed beneath a

cinquefoil-headed arch, presumably not its original position. The clerk told us that there had been many disputes over the original use of this, one suggestion being that it had formed a portion of a confessional, and that those who came to confess knelt upon it, which improbable supposition only served to prove to us how impossible it is now to discover its first intention. In going over old churches with an intelligent clerk, we always give full consideration to all he has to tell us, for though he himself may possess but little knowledge of the past, still, as he frequently conducts learned antiquaries over the edifice under his charge, he has excellent opportunities of becoming acquainted with the opinions of others best able to form correct judgments upon the facts presented to them. Though we get our information thus second-hand, it has often proved of value to us.

As we were leaving the church we noticed some hoppers coming along the road—a rough-looking lot, possibly honest, though their appearance hardly suggested this virtue. The clerk noticed them as well, and thereupon remarked to us: 'I have often wondered, as the church doors are left open all day, so that any one may walk in, that the building has never been robbed, for there are a lot of queer characters about here during the hopping season.' We also wondered, especially as his remark brought a certain circumstance to our remembrance. A fine old thirteenth-century church we know, situated in a remote, unvisited part of a purely agricultural county, a church possessing some fine carvings, and

of much interest otherwise, although it has never been mentioned in any guide book, as far as we have been able to discover, and consequently is wholly unknown to the genus tourist. Once, not so very long ago, this church possessed some remarkably fine and curious ancient brasses. These, since our visit, have been stolen, and gone no one knows whither. It appears to us that the thief must have been some wretched curiosity collector or dealer, who had made it his business to discover these rare old brasses, possibly through some county history or antiquarian work, deeming this remote neglected fane a safe place to rob. It is not pleasant to think that there are such miserably degraded creatures in the world, who for the mere love of collecting or the hope of gain do not even hesitate to steal the memorials of the dead. How pitifully mean such an action seems! Baseness could hardly further go! From what we could learn, it would appear that the church was left open, that during the week some one must have entered it, duly prepared for the nefarious transaction, and, undisturbed, accomplished his object. It certainly does seem passing strange to me that a stranger should be able thus successfully to plunder a country church, in a district where strangers are about as rare as eagles, and take away with him unperceived by any one several brasses, especially as the church in question is far removed from a railway station, and that in spite of all endeavours the thief could not be traced, and to this day presumably retains in safety his ill-gotten articles. Though perhaps the most daring, this is not, alas! the sole

instance of the kind that has been brought before our notice; and not so very long ago, in a certain curiosity shop, I was actually offered a portion of an old brass that the proprietor had on sale, all dates and names being carefully cut away; and when I told the owner I thought he ought to be prosecuted for selling such things, he merely laughed at me, and said that particular brass came from Germany—a story I did not believe, though I could not prove otherwise—and that such articles 'were hard to get hold of.' Oh, the meanness of the world! What will not men do for money? But enough: let us revert to a pleasanter subject, and proceed with our journey.

Like Charing, Lenham is one of those old-time villages situated on the ancient pilgrims' road, that has now lost its former importance, though still rich in relics and traditions of that miracle-loving age. Unnoted now in these days of railway travel and multiplying watering-places, yet the history of Lenham extends far back into the distant past, till the times even before the Conqueror came into the land. Many a large prosperous town of to-day had neither name nor place when Lenham had renown; for we find that in the year 804 'twenty ploughlands in Lenham were given to the Abbots of St. Augustine, at Canterbury, by Cenulph, King of Mercia, and Cuthred, King of Kent; and their estate here was afterwards considerably increased by Athelwolf, King of the West Saxons.'

We drove on now through a country rich in scenic attractions, and beautiful beyond word description. How could it be otherwise, for were we not

passing through the heart of fair Kent? and where in the whole wide world can a more lovely country be found? As we drove through Harrietsham, a pretty little village with some picturesque timbered houses, we noticed again that the name of the place was painted upon a board and placed on the outside of one of the cottages.

A pleasant stretch of sunlit country, and we came upon a wooded bit of road: here a tree-clad height to our right, crowned with Scotch firs, reminded us of the 'North Countrie.' It was as though we had been by some magic suddenly transported to Scotland, a startling change from the well-tilled fields and green daisy-dotted meadows that make beautiful this homelike land of Kent. Looking downwards through the red-stemmed trees to our left, a surprise peep was revealed to us; and this is what we saw: a grey old castle, set on three islands in the midst of a little lake, as romantic a picture as could be found within the four seas that gird our 'tight little island'—or out of them, for that matter. We involuntarily pulled up, so enchanted were we with the prospect, which charmed us all the more because of its unexpectedness. I know of no other English castle like this, thus picturesquely placed in the centre of a lake; and Kent is about the least likely of any county, one would have thought, to possess such an uncommon sight.

A little farther on we came upon a small road-side inn, and as this had stabling attached we at once decided to bait our horses and rest a while there, and take the fortunate opportunity thus offered

LEEDS CASTLE GATEWAY, KENT.

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to view at our leisure the picturesque and rambling old stronghold. The landlord told us that we could reach the park in which the castle is situated through his garden, so, getting our sketching materials and photographic apparatus out of the phaeton, we started off thither.

Leeds Castle possesses a long history, and has had many owners; it was, moreover, an important fortress in its day, commanding as it did the road to Canterbury and the sea-coast. Placed in the centre of a large and deep sheet of water, built upon three islands, each portion of the stronghold being separately defended, having connection with each other merely by drawbridges, the whole being further protected by advance works, this castle in the pre-cannon age must have been almost impregnable from assault. The grand lake-like moat that surrounds it is formed by damming up the little river Len—or rivulet, rather, should I say. Wandering round this mighty moat, we came to the oldest part of the structure, the hoary old gateway, with its grey bastion walls, the drawbridge being now replaced by a two-arched one of stone. We at once got our sketch-book and paint-box out and made a water-colour drawing of this, which for the benefit of my readers I have had engraved.

During the whole of our journey we had not come upon a more picturesque subject for the brush, and, besides making a pleasing sketch, we exposed two of our photographic plates upon the time-worn edifice. A worthy memorial this of the master-builders who raised these glorious structures, massive,

stern, and grand. Stern erst, but beautified now by age, weather-stained, with its mighty walls lichen-painted many tints, crumbling and broken even in places; all the better and more interesting for these 'brunts and bruises' showing plainly its chequered long life's history. Would the photographic plate could give us the wonderful blended tints that time has painted these old walls! Who knows the hidden possibilities of photography, the future that is before it?

Leeds Castle is both an extensive and a magnificent pile of building. A considerable portion of it was erected in the reign of Henry VIII., but it comprises various other periods, from the stern, warlike Edwardian to that of the present peaceful century—a happy blending of the ancient and modern, neither, fortunately, spoiling the other, the old and the new mingled in a rare harmony. With many alterations and additions, the once famous stronghold has been converted into a palatial residence, romantically pleasant to live in during the sunny summer time, but damp and cold and dreary, one would imagine, in the winter, owing to its low situation and the surrounding water. It seemed to us as though it would keep a whole colliery going to maintain the great rambling pile at all warm in the latter season of the year. As we sat sketching this hoary relic of the feudal past, visions of steel-clad knights and the romantic days of chivalry came up before us. More or less, it is time that gives us the picturesque ideal of a bygone age—the present only affords prosaic facts.

I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court,
. . . . . .
. . . of some black chief, half knight, half sheep-lifter.

The whole of the long pleasant summer afternoon did we spend sketching and photographing the old castle, and sauntering about the charmingly wooded park that surrounds it, so that it was late when we once more resumed our journey. The west was growing golden with the setting sun, and the trees made long bars of shadow across our road. It was a most enjoyable drive we had that evening, through a pretty country, to Maidstone. Beautiful, doubtless, at all times, doubly beautiful did it appear in the quiet gloaming. Broad lights and mystic shadows were all around, the distance was dreamily indistinct; the labours of the day were ended, and peace and tranquillity everywhere prevailed.

At Maidstone we were again fortunate in our inn. At the 'Star' we found excellent quarters and a most obliging host. An old-fashioned hostel is the 'Star,' having a large courtyard in the rear with ample stabling. Were railways suddenly to disappear from the land, and coaches and postchaises once more become a necessity, the 'Star' would require no change to accommodate itself to the altered circumstances. How characteristic these rambling old inn-yards are, with their surrounding colony of outbuildings and general look of spaciousness. In these, the day's stage over, we generally indulge in a

meditative pipe, whilst watching our horses being groomed, chatting with the ostler meanwhile—was there ever an ostler who does not love to gossip? —gathering thus what news we may, and learning about our road for the morrow. Ostlers, like the rest of mankind, are of all sorts, good, bad, and indifferent, but mostly characters in their way. As the majority of country people—farmers, as well as gentry—still drive when they go to town or market to make purchases or do their business, and as ostlers are a talkative race, thus from one and another they, the ostlers, learn the news and all the local doings going on around. This, in turn, they retail, so that a half-hour's chat with one of these gossiping individuals is seldom without interest. The traveller by road will find the willingly given information of the various ostlers he comes across on his journey of more worth than the ordinary run of guide-book particulars—compiled, it may be, by some one who has never been in the part of the country of which the work treats.

Leaving Maidstone, we entered at once upon a pretty country. About a mile on our way we passed an old farmhouse, with many gables; from here, far below us in the valley to the right, we observed what in the distance appeared to us to be the grey ruins of some old castle, though the name of this we could not discover either from our maps or road-book. A few more miles of pleasant country brought us to the village of Larkfield. From this spot we had a grand panoramic view over a vast extent of country. Here we noticed some pictur-

esque old houses, quaint, irregular, weather-tinted, many-chimneyed and high-gabled, a delight to look upon; and also, besides, sundry new ones in the nineteenth-century modern builder's style, in rows of four houses each, not delightful to look upon.

Then on into the rural country once again. Here we found ourselves right in the midst of the hoppers, who were busy at work in the fields on either side of us. At one spot, beneath the shelter of some overhanging trees, we came suddenly upon a camp of these hoppers, waiting, they told us, till the crop should be ripe to pick. From what we could learn, it would seem that they had engaged with a farmer, who had provided them with tents till he could employ them. Meanwhile the hoppers were doing nothing. Their camp, with the time-honoured kettle supported on a tripod, and a blue film of smoke slowly ascending therefrom, formed a telling picture, so much so that we were tempted to get our camera out and take an instantaneous photograph of the lazy group and their picturesque surroundings—unwillingly lazy, I must own, for they grumbled much because for some unexplained reason this farmer's crop was behind the rest, and, worse still, it did not promise well. 'And you know,' said one of the party to us—we did not know, but no matter—'that a poor crop takes a deal more picking than a good one, for the hops are smaller, and it takes nearly as long again to fill a bin, so we have double the work to do and less pay to get, which is hard lines on a poor man, and nobody is any the better off.' Here I may say, though rough-looking

outwardly, whenever we chanced to speak to them we found the much-abused hoppers invariably civil. One of them, indeed, said to us: 'I know as how we've got a bad name, but 'tain't deserved as a rule; of course we're poor and dress roughly, but we come in the country to work, as well as to get a breath of fresh air. 'Tain't those as work or who are willing to work as is the bad ones. No, sir, it's them who stays in town and won't work as is the vagabonds;' and we concluded that there was some truth in the remark.

Our camera was a great source of pleasure to us; it was in constant requisition during the whole of our outing, and in the evenings, when we had nothing else to do, or when the weather was wet, we found the development of our photographs to be a never-failing source of amusement. There are few things more interesting than watching a picture being evolved from an exposed plate or film; at first there is absolutely nothing to be observed, then gradually, almost magically it seems, the scene comes forth, one thing after another showing till the whole is revealed. We took instantaneous photographs, having a rapid lens and a shutter especially adapted to this work; and should any of my readers go on a driving tour and elect to take a camera on the journey, my advice to them is to do the same. Thus equipped, a photograph is obtainable at any time; there is no weary waiting for a still moment that may never come, no blurred trees, or figures that have moved. Besides working thus instantaneously, we secured many an interesting picture that we must

otherwise have lost when, upon windy days, the foliage was bending before the breeze; moreover, we were able to obtain photographs of haymakers at work, cattle browsing in the fields, rustic figures in natural unstudied positions, not looking as though they were standing to be taken, breaking waves, wind-rippled water—how beautiful this!—and the ever-changing cloudscapes, besides countless other similar subjects: and are not such natural effects better worth than the usual run of depressingly uninteresting productions that the ordinary art-ignoring photographer takes simply to sell? Object photographs these merely, not pictures—it seems to be forgotten, whether the brush or camera be employed, that it takes brains to make a picture: photography should be an art as well as a science. We have had enough and to spare, the world is overburdened with mechanical reproductions of scenery, taken without a single artistic thought or impulse, though technically excellent very possibly. There is no reason why a photograph should not be as well a picture in black and white, though it so very rarely is. When this is achieved, photography is raised to an art.

A few miles after leaving the hoppers' picturesque camp the country became wild once again. Forests of firs and unprofitable sandy commons gave place to the pleasant hopfields. The sudden change from the richly cultivated lands to these wild wooded wastes made us appreciate both the more. Such contrasts enhance in a wonderful manner our enjoyment of scenery; for even beautiful scenes may in

time become monotonous, if endlessly repeated with little of variety. Lover of mountains though I be, still I must confess that even to me a flat country is a relief, for a time, after much wandering amongst the hills, in spite of the fact that, as a rule, level lands are to me wanting in interest, excepting for their glorious unobstructed skyscapes, which, however, can hardly be considered as belonging to scenery.

Driving on, we came to the small hamlet of Borough Green. That we well remember for an ugly church by the roadside, and a picturesque little inn, the landlord of which we concluded, from certain things that we observed, to be somewhat of a character. On the front of the inn was a clock—a spot where clocks are rarely to be found; above the face of this was written the single word 'YOUR,' and beneath the two words 'WILL COME,' so that we presumed it was intended to read, 'YOUR (TIME) WILL COME.' On the roof of the building (of all unlikely places) was the sign of the hostel, a circular space with a black horse painted thereon, framed in by stones cemented together, which had mosses growing between them; and, furthermore, in the little garden attached to the inn we noticed what appeared to us to be a grave with a tombstone at the head. This so aroused our curiosity that we descended, and read the following inscription thereon—

Poor Trust
Is Dead.
Buried Yesterday.

As we were deciphering this, mine host himself

came out, and laughingly remarked, 'I had to do that to give the folks a gentle hint, for they're very fond in these parts of drinking to-day and paying to-morrow, and to-morrow never comes.' Altogether, from the chat we had with him, we felt more than ever convinced that the landlord was a character, much too original to waste his genius in this remote spot; so at least we thought, but then he possibly knew his business far better than we did.

The next place of interest we came to was the pretty little village of Ightham, which contains some interesting old houses. One in particular pleased us much—an ancient building, with fine chimneys and high gables, the woodwork of these carved and dark, its roof bent with age, the timbers supporting this having evidently to a certain extent given way, after having borne their heavy burden long centuries—a picturesque old place, possibly pleasanter to look upon than live in. I remember once remarking to the owner of a somewhat similar old house, 'What a charming home you have!' and receiving for reply, 'That's just what everybody says who has not to inhabit it, but I don't want a house to sit out of doors and look at;' by which remark we concluded that the interior arrangements and conveniences of the old place did not quite come up to the ideas of its possessor of what they ought to be. Whilst in the act of taking a photograph of the ancient structure, a native of the spot came up to me, and said, 'Be you a-going to take the old house, mister?' This was evidently by way of introduction, for, with-

out waiting for an answer to his query, he continued his remarks: 'She be a funny tumble-down old place, that her be; the oldest house in Kent, so they do say.'

About two miles from this village is Ightham Mote, one of the most picturesque homes of a bygone day to be found in all broad England. We made inquiries if we could see this old house, of two people. One replied that 'he did not know, but he thought not'; the other said that 'he was not quite sure, but the house was let, and the present tenant did not care to let strangers over'; neither of which replies were at all satisfactory. However, we determined to proceed thither on the possible chance that we might be permitted to view the place. So we remounted the phaeton and drove on to Ivy Hatch, a hamlet consisting of a few scattered houses. We stabled our horses there, at the little village inn, a poor old cow having to be turned out of the shed that did duty for a stable to accommodate them—somewhat rough quarters, but better than none. Then we proceeded in search of Ightham Mote, some half-mile away in the valley, down a deeply rutted lane. Ightham Moat it is often called in error—a natural mistake to make; but the name is in reality derived from the ancient Saxon word 'mót' or 'mote,' a place, and has so been written from the earliest time. A steep, rough, winding lane it proved to be, but all the better for that, as we were afoot, and not driving: a most enjoyable ramble it was, that hot summer afternoon, the green gloom of the overarching foliage, the slumberous rustling of

the wind-stirred trees, the liquid gurgling of an unseen stream, the musical song of birds, all made our stroll a very delightful one; and presently the grey walls, lichen clad roof, and many chimney-stacks of Ightham Mote came into sight.

There is one other moated house, and only one, as far as I am aware, that can at all compare to this ancient Kentish home, and that is Compton Wynyates, in Warwickshire. William Howitt has written a charming description of his first sight of this, a description that might equally be applied to Ightham, seen as we approached it; so much so, in fact, that I have ventured to reproduce his description here, for it exactly conveys the impression that the first view of this place gave to us. We felt, indeed, that it might have been written of this very spot. This, then, is what he says: 'There stood, in its perfect calm, that . . . old mansion, with all its gables, towers, and twisted chimneys, with its one solitary smoke ascending above its roof, and around it neither habitation nor any other visible object, nor sound of life'—(we heard some peacocks screaming, however). 'Its hills and woods seemed to shut it in to a perpetual loneliness, and the gleam of still waters came dimly here and there through the openings of overhanging boughs. I hastened down into the valley and plunged into the woody shades'—(so did we)—'I passed the head of those nearly hidden ponds, and as I approached the house its utter solitude became more and more sensibly felt. It was now the moated grange of Tennyson's poetry. You might quite expect to see Mariana watching at one of the

windows. The moat was not as most old moats now are—dry, and become a green hollow, but full of water, as if necessary for defence. As you drew near . . . the garden on your left, leading down to the house, remains in the style it had been first laid out some centuries ago.' Not often can you come upon such a romantic reality.

Proceeding onwards, we soon found ourselves in the pleasant old-fashioned garden that surrounds the weather-stained pile. A startling contrast the gay beds of bright flowers made with the sombre-toned walls of the ancient house close at hand. We were about to cross the grey stone bridge which now gives access to the house over the moat by way of the tower-guarded entrance, when we noticed a lady in the garden indulging in the delightful occupation of gathering roses, whereupon we at once changed our course, and politely craved permission of her to view the interior of the mansion. It is always so much more agreeable to deal with the master or mistress of a house than with servants. We apologised for our intrusion, stated our wishes, and made the best excuse we could for asking such a favour, explaining the great interest we took in old houses, and stating that we were on a driving tour, though it struck us afterwards that this last fact was a most unreasonable plea with which to cover our request. However, the lady most good-naturedly at once granted our wishes, and told us to go to the entrance, ring the bell, and tell the butler to show us over the place; and she did more than this, for directly afterwards she followed us with thoughtful intent, in

order to make quite sure that we were admitted, and instructed the servant to conduct us over the various parts of the interior that were of interest, and told him as well to give us any information that we might desire. Duly did we appreciate the kind courtesy shown to us—strangers merely, unknown wanderers by road.

First we entered the courtyard. And what a picture met our delighted gaze !—a picture of carved and fretted gables, clustering dark-red chimneys, quaint doorways with curious mouldings, mullioned windows with leaden lattice-panes, filled in here and there, these, with stained glass. Some portions of the ancient structure are half-timbered, the beams brown and bent with age ; others are of substantial stone, the different periods being happily combined into one most pleasing whole, crusted all with moss and lichen, time-toned into a harmony of many hues, and overgrown besides in places with trailing creepers. A poem in architecture ; a picture, rather than a home raised to suit man's convenience—a spot an artist might conceive on canvas but scarcely ever hope to find actually existing—a romance in building, made beautiful by the bloom of centuries, eye-delighting to look upon, fascinatingly interesting, for every stone seems to be fraught with the memories of the long ago.

I do love these ancient homes of the olden time—homes whose very walls are histories, whose every chamber you enter suggests some past love legend, whose spacious halls tell of wassail cup and merry cheer, and bring before the mind's eye

figures of brave and gallant men, gone to dust forgotten centuries past. Peace be with them; 'their souls are with the saints, we trust!'

Over uneven flagstones, worn by feet that will never tread them more, we were led, and then taken up a flight of ancient stairs to the private family chapel, disused now. This remains much as it originally was, with the old oak pulpit and benches, though it has now a sadly neglected look. Then we were shown the fine baronial hall, built in the early portion of the fourteenth century—a grand apartment, with great stone arches, possessing quaint conceits in corbels where they spring from the olden walls; the fireplace, with its open hearth and iron dogs, suggests mighty fires of cracking logs, feasting and revelry. The drawing-room also contains a fine carved mantelpiece, though the paltry modern grate it now surmounts and the very modern furniture are sadly out of harmony with the ancient chamber, and are assertively out of keeping with their time-hallowed and age-dimmed surroundings. But I am not going to attempt to enter into a detailed description of this interesting old pile; such is beyond my powers. No words, least of all any words of mine, can do it justice. Ightham Mote is a place to be seen, not described.

Leaving this relic of the past by the gateway we entered it by, as we recrossed the moat we observed how dark and green the water in it looked. Straight out of this rise the hoary walls of the ancient structure—walls that have been lighted up with the summer suns and beaten

by the winter storms of five hundred chequered years.

There is hardly an old English home of any consequence but is endeared to us by some romance, some love-story, in which one fair damsel plays a prominent part—a tender legend that lingers in the memory of the spot. Some of these have become famous; others are less well known. Ightham Mote seems to suggest some such story; one feels instinctively that the place would not be complete without it. As Dorothy Vernon is inseparably connected with Haddon, Anne Boleyn with Hever, Amy Robsart with 'the haunted towers of Cumnor Hall,' so is Dorothy Selby with Ightham, of whom tradition asserts that she 'discovered the meaning of the anonymous letter written to Lord Monteagle, to whom she was nearly related, warning him not to attend the Houses of Parliament at the time of the Gunpowder Plot.' It is but right to say that this tradition has been disputed as well as upheld by certain learned antiquaries; but the inscription upon her tomb in Ightham Church tends to imply that there is some foundation for the story, and that it is not altogether apocryphal. This inscription runs as follows :—

To the pretious name and honour
of
Dame Dorothy Selby

She a Dorcas was,
Whose curious needle turn'd the abused stage
Of this leud world into the golden age;
Whose pen of steel, and silken inck, enroll'd
The acts of Jonah in records of gold;

Whose arts disclos'd that plot, which, had it taken,
Rome had tryumph'd, and Britain's walls had shaken.

She was
In heart a Lydia, and in tongue a Hanna,
In zeal a Ruth, in wedlock a Susannah,
Prudently simple, providently wary,
To the world a Martha, and to heaven a Mary,
Who put on immortality in the year of her { pilgrimage, 69. / Redeemer, 1641.

Leaving Ightham Mote, we had a pleasant drive through a wild and wooded country to the pretty little village of Seal. Here we were directed to the grocer's shop for the key of the church, procuring which, we proceeded to inspect the interior of that edifice. The building itself is not of much note; but we discovered there a very fine old brass, on the floor of the chancel, of great interest. This bears date 1358, and is the most ancient that we have come across, as well as the most perfect and beautiful. It is probably one of the earliest in the kingdom. The brass represents a knight clad in a suit of plate armour with a shirt of mail; upon his head is a smooth helmet of uncommon form, at his feet a lion; his face is shown stern and resolute, and reveals to us what manner of man he was. This old fashion of placing a likeness of the deceased upon his tomb enhances its interest vastly. At one side of the helmet is engraved a curious kind of horn. We wondered whether this was intended to signify that the old knight was a huntsman as well as a warrior. Around this well-preserved brass runs the following inscription, each letter clearly cut and as

distinct as when first engraved, five long centuries ago :—

> Hic Jacet dns Willms De Bryene Miles quondam dns de Remsyng, & de Sele; qui obijt xviii die mensis Septembr anno dni M.CCC,LXXXVII cujus aie propicietur Deus. Amen.

Then a few miles of pretty country brought us to Sevenoaks, our last resting-place away from home ; for the next day saw us once again in London. Dear old smoky London ! ' with all thy faults, I love thee still.'

In the cool of the evening we took a stroll in Knole Park, and wandered as far as the grand old mansion that stands so enviably within that finely timbered and undulating domain. Knole House, once a famous shrine for the sight-seeing pilgrim, is not now shown to visitors. We regretted the circumstance ; but, feeling that every man has a right to possess his home in peace, we did not, as so many do, resent the fact that the noble owner shuts his doors against the intrusion of stangers—why should he not ?—though, as we viewed the many gables, towers, and twisted clustering chimneys of the old historic pile, we could not but feel how great to us the pleasure would be to wander along its stately corridors, and over its ancient halls and chambers, fraught all with the associations of a glorious past.

And now, kind reader, our wanderings are over. It is only left for me to bid you good-bye, and to thank you for your company, trusting that, in however small a measure, you who have travelled with us so far may have entered—though at second-hand

—somewhat into the spirit and pleasures of our most delightful outing. For ourselves, though our journey is over and only a memory of it remains, still its pleasures linger with us, and the recollections of many sunny scenes and beauty spots lend a charm to the dull dreary days of a London winter, for

> It is not only while we look upon
> A lovely landscape, that its beauties please ;
> In distant days, when we afar are gone
> From such, in Fancy's idle reveries,
> Or moods of mind which Memory loves to seize,
> It comes in living beauty, fresh as when
> We first beheld it : valley, hill, or trees
> O'ershadowing unseen brooks, or outstretched fen
> With cattle sprinkled o'er, exist and charm again.

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